

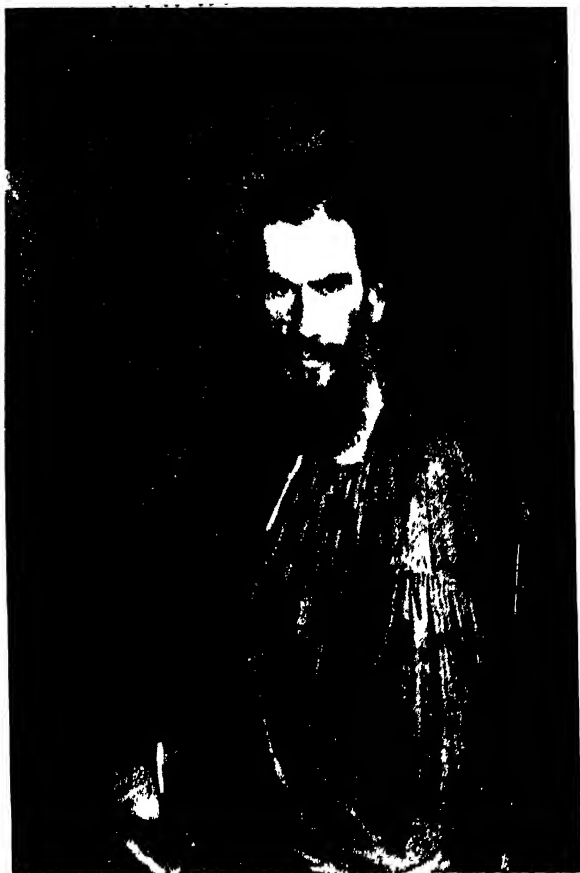
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T O L S T O Y
THE INCONSTANT GENIUS



COUNT LEO NICHOLAYEVICH TOLSTOY

A portrait by I. Kramskoy, 1873

TOLSTOY

THE INCONSTANT GENIUS

A Biography

BY
ALEXANDER I. NAZAROFF

With Twenty Illustrations

JACKET AND ENDPAPER DESIGN BY
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T O L S T O Y
THE INCONSTANT GENIUS

(September 8, 1828–November 20, 1910)

T O L S T O Y

CHAPTER I

THE REALM OF THE "GREEN STICK"

I

An imposing forty-two-room house, with columns, balconies and portraits of ancestors in powdered wigs; a large park, adorned with seven lakes and picturesque flower-beds; a dignified eighteenth-century grandmother, with a white lace bonnet and a gold snuff-box, and an interminable array of relatives and domestic serfs—such was the world in which Leo awoke to life. Here at Yassnaya Polyana, all was infused with the kindly patriarchalism of a prosperous aristocratic family. One of the earliest reminiscences which Leo's memory preserved for him was this: in the drawing-room, where the whole family is assembled, the aunts talk with the grandmother. The door leading into the library opens, and Leo's father, with his beautiful, sad eyes and graceful, manly movements, enters. He hands his long pipe to the lackey who follows him, kisses the grandmother's hand, sits down beside her on the sofa, talks and jests. Presently, the major-domo appears at the threshold and announces that dinner is served. All arise. The count offers his arm to his mother; the two aunts walk after them, and the children follow suit. Here, always at the same spot, Leo runs up to his father, whose hand touches his hair and neck. He adores that large, beautifully shaped hand; he holds it, and dares not kiss it, but finally kisses it. It pats the boy's cheek, and the boy throbs with happiness. Leo loved his father most of all, but he also loved his grandmother and his aunts and the serfs; it seemed to him that they, too, loved one another, and he was certain that all of them loved him and did their best to make him happy.

The boy was not at all good-looking, but the five years of his age, his pink cheeks and his exuberant health made him attractive. Rushing into a room (for such was his usual way of transporting himself from one place to another), he bore on his face such a happy and astonished expression that it always seemed as if he had just made some important discovery, which he wanted to announce to the whole world. He liked to jest; he was always radiant with smiles; he was tender, yielding and polite. When some one petted him, tears would come to his eyes. This, indeed, was his weakness: he wept so often that his brothers nicknamed him "*Lyova-ryova*"—"The Weeping Leo." But for the most part, his tears were occasioned not by sorrow, but by joy. He wept when his aunts kissed him and called him "poor boy"; when he himself kissed Milka and called her "such a good doggie"; and when, after having scolded him for this or that escapade, the old housekeeper gave him cookies.

II

Leo did not remember his mother—he was hardly two when she had died. Her place in his life was held by the plump, good-looking, good-natured Mlle. Yergolsky, whom he called aunt, and who was in fact a distant cousin of his father's. It was rather by right of love than by right of kinship that she occupied it, for, after the death of the Countess Tolstoy, there remained at least two ladies who could claim it with a better reason than she. These ladies were the count's mother and sister. The first of these, however, was too old and wise to take that burdensome rôle upon herself, for burdensome it must certainly be: the children were five in number (Leo had three brothers and one sister), and all of them were as healthy and as mischievous as he. The second, the Countess Osten-Sacken, was still young, but she was no more disposed to assume the duties of an educatress: she was a widow with a tragedy in her past—with a kind heart, it is true, but with hardly any desire to devote her attention to the affairs of this world, most of her time being spent in prayer, in conversation with priests and monks, and in other pious occupations. Thus, the burden naturally devolved upon Mlle. Yergolsky, as all burdens, by a strange conspiracy of fate, used to devolve upon her in the Tolstoy household.

Leo singled her out from among all the ladies who lived in the

house. Whenever an important question, necessitating immediate solution, arose before him—as, for example: Should he avenge his brother Dimitry for his bleeding nose? or: Why did they crucify Jesus Christ? or: What would happen if one swallowed the stone of a plum?—he ran to her, to “Aunt Tanya,” and, burying his head in the folds of her dress, received from her consolation, knowledge and valuable advice. Her face bending over his little bed was, in fact, the earliest reminiscence of his conscious life. He knew that, until quite recently, he had lived upstairs in Mlle. Yergolsky’s room, together with his little sister Marie. There came a day, however, when they told him that he had become too big a boy to be with girls, and that he would henceforth live downstairs with his brothers and with Herr Rössel, their German governor. He remembered very well how he stood on his bed and, as Mlle. Yergolsky dressed him for the last time, shed streams of bitter tears. The idea that something was irretrievably lost, that his dear Aunt Tanya would never see him to bed again, that the terrible Herr Rössel would usurp her place, and that these things could not be avoided, because Father and Grandmother willed them to be so, filled him with terror. And while he stood there, weeping, screaming and kicking, he felt for the first time that life was a very serious proposition.

All this, however, now belonged to the past. Leo blushed with shame when he was reminded of that scene. Indeed, Fyodor Ivanovich—for so they called the governor in Russian—was a kind old man and a liberal pedagogue. He pulled the ears of his disciples only when it was strictly necessary, and then he did so in such an informal manner that the harmony which reigned between him and the boys remained unimpaired. For ten years he had worn the same dressing gown and read the same book—it was a history of the Seven Years’ War—and both the dressing-gown and the book remained immaculately clean. Leo often felt a genuine tenderness for him. In the midst of a noisy game, he would leave his brothers and steal into Herr Rössel’s room. There the worthy German sat, always in the same easy-chair, always pondering. His wrinkled face, the spectacles on the end of his aquiline nose, the imperturbable tranquillity of his dignified bald head, the history of the Seven Years’ War lying open on his knees—all the mystery of another man’s life—deeply touched Leo. “Poor, dear Fyodor Ivanovich! What is he thinking about? And

why is he so lonely?" With these thoughts filling his mind, Leo would run up to Herr Rössel, jump on his knees, and burst into tears. And while Herr Rössel wiped the boy's eyes with his checkered kerchief and asked him with compassion what could be the matter, Leo felt that his life, which comprehended such a wonderful father, such a kind Aunt Tanya and such a poor, dear Fyodor Ivanovich, was certainly a very wonderful thing indeed; and, overwhelmed by that thought, he wept still more copiously and felt still happier.

After their lessons, the four brothers would amuse themselves in the park, which, for Leo, held numberless attractions. It gave him joy to rush out of the bushes and attack Dimitry or Serge, to ride the pony, to watch his father's wolf-hounds as they ran around and leaped upon him. Exhausted by hours of such pursuits, the brothers would rest under some old oak. Here Nicholas, the eldest, who had already begun to read novels, would often hold them spellbound by the stories of knights, bandits or ghosts which he could devise in infinite variety. One day, however, his indefatigable imagination took a different turn. He informed the boys, in a solemn whisper, that he had discovered a great secret: he had learned how to make the whole world happy, how to spread love over every kingdom, and how to put an end to wars among men. He had written that secret, he added, on a magical green stick, which he had buried beside the highroad at the place where it turns into Zakaz Forest. Strange as it may have been, this wild fantasy of the nine-year-old pacifist made the deepest impression upon Leo. His eyes burned as he listened; he burst into tears with excitement and, of course, was again contemptuously called "*Lyova-ryova*." But his memory preserved this incident, with all its details and in all freshness, throughout the seventy-six years of his subsequent life. If, however, Leo could at that time have formulated his philosophy, he would doubtless have said that, although it remained buried, the magical green stick reigned unchallenged over the whole of the sunlit and smiling world.

III

Count Nicholas Ilyich Tolstoy, Leo's father, was a man of thirty-eight, in the full bloom of health and strength. Muscular, elegant, well-built and well-groomed, he carried about his person that indefinable air of self-assurance, chivalry and restrained light-

mindfulness which was typical of the Russians of his class and time and which appealed to all, especially to women.

At a very early age, he fought with distinction in the Russo-Napoleonic wars, was taken prisoner and suffered great hardships in Paris; perhaps it was from these experiences that he derived, at least in a measure, his slightly skeptical attitude towards life (of which he knew a great deal) and men (for whom he cared little). With this, however, he combined a natural cheerfulness of disposition and a lively, sanguine manner. His serfs regarded him as a lenient and well-disposed master; in any case, the command "To the stables!" (for it was in the stables that corporal punishments were usually inflicted upon serfs) seldom escaped his lips, while the dread sentence "To Siberia!"—not an infrequent one in the establishments of his noble contemporaries—had never been heard at Yasnaya Polyana. Like most of the men of his class, he spoke French better than Russian; nor was this merely a superficial European veneer: he was well read (especially in the French literature of the eighteenth century) and attentively followed every notable book that was published in Europe.

The Tolstoys had always stood very high in the aristocratic hierarchy of Russia; they had for centuries supplied the Muscovite Czardom—and later the Petersburgean Empire—with outstanding courtiers, government ministers, army leaders and diplomats. If he had so desired, Count Nicholas Ilyich would probably have risen without difficulty to high dignities and honors. He did not, however, share the ambitiousness of his ancestors, and preferred to eschew politics, living peacefully as an independent country squire. Besides, as a liberal and a disciple of Voltaire, he did not approve of the Emperor Nicholas I's strictly conservative policy, although he never permitted himself to criticize his monarch in the presence of his friends or family.

Count Nicholas Ilyich had inherited Yasnaya Polyana, as well as the other estates which he owned in the province of Tula, from his late wife. It was a secret from nobody that he had married her only for her money. He had been born to wealth, but his father, a fabulously extravagant magnate of the age of the great Catherine, had squandered all that the family possessed. When his father had died in 1820, the twenty-five-year-old Nicholas Ilyich found himself heir to a fortune which consisted of an im-

posing list of debts, of an old, capricious, spoiled mother, of the penniless Countess Osten-Sacken and of the equally impoverished Mlle. Yergolsky, who had been brought up by his parents. This situation came as an unexpected shock to all four—as long as the old count was alive, none of them had actually known anything of the condition of his affairs. It was at that time that Nicholas Ilyich's attention was drawn to the Princess Marie Nicholayevna Volkonsky, a rich but singularly ugly maiden, who had long since been pronounced by the gossips of Moscow as beyond all hope of ever finding herself a husband. The count hesitated for a long



SILHOUETTE OF COUNTESS MARIE NICHOLAYEVNA TOLSTOY, LEO TOLSTOY'S MOTHER (HER ONLY EXISTING PICTURE)

time—marriage for money did not appeal to him. What was still more important, he and Mlle. Yergolsky had long been in love with one another, and it was agreed between them that they would presently marry. However, the young lady realized how badly the family needed the estates of the Princess Volkonsky; and she regarded the Tolstoy's as her benefactors, for at a very early age she had been made an orphan and, but for the timely intervention of the old countess, she would have been sent to the poorhouse. She made a quick and energetic decision, broke off her engagement to the man she loved, and yielded him to the Princess Volkonsky. The wedding took place in 1822, and Count Nicholas Ilyich moved with the caravan of his lady dependents to his wife's house at Yassnaya Polyana.

The marriage thus unenthusiastically entered into proved to be an unusually happy one. On the Countess Marie Nicholayevna's sudden death, the whole family deplored her loss with sincere tears. She was described by all as a pattern of Christian character. No one had ever heard her raise her voice; yet, in spite of her meekness, her extreme reserve and her almost abnormal kindness, there was about her some intangible quality, whether it was the innate dignity of a great lady or some hidden power of spirit, which made all, from the servants to the old countess herself, respect and admire her. She was remembered at Yassnaya Polyana as a saint.

A few years had passed since her death. Now, as Count Nicholas Ilyich again was free, he once more proposed to Mlle. Yergolsky. She still was ardently in love with him, but she refused, again sacrificing her happiness to "duty"—she did not want to spoil her pure relations with the children by becoming their stepmother. And so the life of Yassnaya continued in its normal course. The count worked on his estates, spent entire days in the forest with his wolf-hounds (hunting was his passion) and sometimes courted the wives of neighboring country-squires. Mlle. Yergolsky and Countess Osten-Sacken supervised the administration of the household. Over this peaceful country life, the old countess reigned like a dowager empress, revered by all, obeyed by all and criticizing all. To her, who remembered the days and the Court of Catherine the Great, the new age and the newly arisen mighty appeared petty and unimposing.

IV

As the boys grew up—Leo was now eight, Dimitry nine, Serge ten and Nicholas thirteen—it was decided that the family should move to Moscow, where a better education could be procured for the children than was possible in the country. Leo long remembered that event. The train indeed represented a veritable Noah's Ark on land: the count, with the ladies and the children, traveled in several large *dormeuses*, which were followed by a whole train of carts and other vehicles for the transportation of furniture and of scores of serfs—the Yassnopolyanian tailors, cobblers, cooks, carpenters, etc. At that time, the rich lived in Moscow very much as they did in the country, in self-supporting economic entities: they kept their own grain and cattle in the back-yards of their

often luxurious houses, and one could frequently observe a hog investigating a pile of garbage in one of the main streets of Russia's ancient capital.

It was here, in Moscow, that an important change took place in Leo's life. The grown-ups decided that Herr Rössel was too old and not sufficiently learned to educate the boys, and he was accordingly dismissed. In his place, Monsieur Saint-Thomas, a young Frenchman, was engaged. Fyodor Ivanovich was deeply hurt by this decision, and walked about with red eyes. That his thirteen years of service and devotion should be so rewarded wounded him to the quick. When he came to bid farewell to his disciples, Leo clung about his neck and shed an ocean of tears.

Chilled by the new governor's cold and formal manner, Leo greeted him with a premeditated unfriendliness and disobedience. Saint-Thomas miscalculated the situation, and decided to break the boy's spirit with severity. When, however, after the first serious case of insubordination, he seized the boy by the arm, commanded him: "*A genoux!*" and ordered twigs to be brought, he was met with resolute kicks, shouts and bites, which were followed by something like a nervous fit. For a month after that episode, Leo suffered from nightmares: he saw himself a grown-up man; oh, how he would torture that Saint-Thomas and shout to him: "*A genoux! A GENOUX!*" Meanwhile, he glared at the new governor with undisguised and entirely unchildish hatred. The latter was at a loss. Why had they told him that Leo was a meek, yielding boy?

Saint-Thomas now realized that the application of coercive measures was out of the question, and decided to try friendliness, even flattery. "It is a shame for a boy with *your* mind not to understand this or that," he would say; or else he would ejaculate, in conversation with some one of the grown-ups: "*Oh, ce Léon, quelle tête il a! . . . Mais c'est un petit Molière! . . . Vous verrez quel homme il sera!*" Soon the success of the new system proved complete—the boy became like silk. Hearing such remarks, he expanded in happy, embarrassed smiles and was ready to do anything that Saint-Thomas might ask of him.

There was, however, one point on which the governor remained powerless—he could not compel Leo to study. Polonsky, the red-nosed seminary student who gave the brothers lessons in grammar, composition, religion, history and geography, com-



COUNT NICHOLAS ILYICH TOLSTOY

plained almost every day: "*le petit Molière*," he asserted, sat in the classroom, hopelessly abstracted, pinching his brothers, looking blankly out of the window or even dozing off. This pedagogue's diagnosis was not very complimentary to Leo: "Of the three younger Tolstoy boys," he used to say, "Serge wants to study and can study, Dimitry wants to study but cannot, while Leo neither wants to nor can."

Of all scholastic subjects, there was only one which Leo did not oppose with his unconquerable passive resistance, and that was poetry. He spent hour after hour poring over the old Russian *Bylinas* (heroic legends) and especially over Pushkin, whose poems he knew by heart and recited with great enthusiasm. Listening to him, Mlle. Yergolsky would say, with a sigh: "*Le petit tient cela de sa mère*." Every one agreed that the late countess had great gifts for literature and the arts: she was an accomplished musician and a talented improviser of fairy-tales. At provincial balls, crowds of young people, instead of dancing, would gather around her and listen for hours to her stories.

As the boy grew up, there appeared in him peculiarities which astonished the entire household. Perhaps the strangest of these was the truly amazing quickness with which his thoughts were translated into action, without ever being checked by reason or fear. Which was more solid—his head or the window-pane? Which of the two would break, if the former were to bump into the latter? How would he look, if he shaved half of his head and his eye-brows? No sooner did such questions occur to him than he rushed off to solve them by experiment. Once he decided to discover if he could fly like a bird. When everybody went downstairs at dinner-time he climbed to the window-ledge, began to move his arms like wings, leaped, without a moment's hesitation, out into the air and—quite naturally—fell from the height of two stories to the stones of the courtyard. Etiquette was very punctiliously observed in the Tolstoy household: all were to be assembled in the dining-room before the old countess made her appearance. On this day, after having seated herself, she looked inquiringly at the lackey who stood behind Leo's empty chair; Saint-Thomas hastened to apologize for his pupil, saying that some unforeseen reason had probably detained him upstairs. But a few minutes later, when a lackey whispered something in his ear, he rushed abruptly out of the room. This unusual and unseemly breach of etiquette made it clear to everybody that some-

thing momentous had occurred, and the dinner drew to an end in uneasy silence. The boy was found unconscious. Doctors were summoned, but they could not bring him back to his senses: unconsciousness passed into a deep slumber which lasted eighteen hours, after which the boy arose in excellent health, although covered with enormous bruises.

It was in Moscow, too, that, for the first time in his life, Leo experienced the raptures of love. His heroine was the little Sophie Koloshin, blue-eyed and with golden curls, whom he met at the children's balls. Though innocent, the infatuation was real: the boy palpitated and ached with emotion like a real man. In this, indeed, he proved to be more advanced than in other sciences. The great Tolstoy afterwards described this love in one of the best chapters of "Childhood."

V

A year after the family had moved to Moscow, Count Nicholas Ilyich went on a business trip to the city of Tula. There, while walking in the street, he suddenly grew pale, staggered, fell to the pavement, and died within a few minutes. The police established a singular fact: the pocket-book found on the count's body contained neither money nor the documents which he had taken with him when he was preparing to go out.

Leo became aware of a strange, wholly exceptional agitation in the house; he saw Mlle. Yergolsky's trembling chin and swollen eyes, and he heard suppressed sobs from the room of the old countess. Then followed long hours in the church, the solemn chant of the burial service, the kneeling figures of relatives and friends. Yet, seeing and hearing all that, Leo could not believe and did not understand: the word "death" denoted a phenomenon too bewildering for him to grasp. Serfs shook their heads with compassion and called him and his brothers "poor orphans"; this filled him with a confused, still strangely pleasant feeling: he pitied himself. At night, remaining in their bedroom, the three younger brothers would discuss the perplexing question: what was death? But they always fell asleep without having arrived at a satisfactory solution.

Meanwhile, the grown-ups whispered together concerning the possibility that the count had been poisoned by his two favorite lackeys, Peter and Matthew, whom he had given their freedom,

and whom he often entrusted with various important missions in connection with the administration of his estates. Indeed, a few days after his death, a beggar-woman left at the door of the Tolstoy house some of the documents which had disappeared from the count's pocketbook. Would this have happened if the count's death had not been an "inside job"? Cases of serfs killing their masters were not infrequent in Russia. Strange as it may appear, it was for the most part not the ill-treated and down-trodden, but the petted, favorite serfs who committed such deeds. Yet, however the tragedy may have come about, the ladies of the Tolstoy family were so grieved by the event that they made no attempt to inquire into the case. Besides, there existed an old tradition, or rather, a superstition, according to which no man named Nicholas had ever long survived in the Tolstoy family; this seemed in itself to explain the event. The true circumstances of the count's death thus remained unknown.

Crushed by the loss of her son, the old countess fell fatally ill. One day, the children were stopped in the midst of their noisy playing by Mlle. Yergolsky, who announced that their grandmother wished to see them. All in white, the old countess lay, pale, swollen, unrecognizable, in her bed; she looked with haggard eyes at the boys and, with visible difficulty, stretched out her white hand, which they kissed, one after the other, with undisguised fear, in awful silence. A few days later, that magnificent relic of Catherinian days reposed in a high coffin standing in the salon. This time, Leo grasped the horrible meaning of the event. In the days that followed, he got up in the morning and went to bed at night with the feeling that something had changed in the world; that death was in it. Then, the black mourning-jackets which were ordered for the boys distracted his attention from this new reality.

As the sister of the late count, the Countess Osten-Sacken was appointed guardian of the Tolstoy children. There ensued, however, a veritable epidemic of deaths in the family; two years later, the countess died also, while on a journey to the Optin Monastery. Mlle. Yergolsky, the last remaining adult member of the family, would, of course, have been the logical person to take her place. But she was not the children's nearest relative. The late count had a second sister, who had lived for many years in the city of Kazan, married to a wealthy Volga country squire. The law

required that the guardianship should be bestowed upon her.

Mme. Pauline Ilyinichna Yushkov—for such was her name—arrived in Moscow, hastily kissed the children, hastily shed a few tears over the misfortunes that had befallen them and went away, dismissing the whole affair. When, presently, she was reminded of her obligation, she returned to Moscow and took the children with her to Kazan. This involved still another heavy loss for the young Tolstoys. Mme. Yushkov was not on friendly terms with Mlle. Yergolsky, who therefore could not accompany the children. For her, also, this was a grave tragedy.

Mme. Yushkov was a kind, but exceedingly volatile and light-minded woman. Her chief interests in life were society, which she adored, and her husband, of whom she was constantly jealous—and not without reason, for this gentleman paid a great deal of attention to all the representatives of the fair sex at hand, excepting only his wife. It was here, incidentally, that one of the causes of Mme. Yushkov's resentment against Mlle. Yergolsky arose: M. Yushkov had once been Mlle. Yergolsky's ardent, though unsuccessful suitor, and he still spoke of her enthusiastically, punctuating his discourse with the sensuous little laughs of a superannuated satyr. "*Tatiana!*" he used to say, chuckling with delight. "*Oh, elle était charmante!*" Preoccupied with these interests and anxieties, Mme. Yushkov spared little attention to the education of her nephews—a circumstance which, perhaps, was most fortunate for them. She was kind to them; they had all they needed, and most of the time did exactly as they pleased. Saint-Thomas, who had been brought to Kazan with them, was now their only preceptor.

Leo was no longer a child. The events of these last years had left a visible imprint on him. He was still joyous, mischievous, kind-hearted and childishly sentimental; he still ran and played with Dimitry in the house and in the garden, as he had formerly done in Moscow. Nevertheless, he realized, though perhaps as yet only instinctively, that something was ended. The trees and bushes at Yassnaya; the large, beautifully shaped hand of his father; the wolf-hounds with which he had rolled in the grass; all that sunny realm of the magical green stick appeared to him as a happy dream which was no more and which henceforth belonged only to the past.

CHAPTER II

SAILING OUT INTO LIFE

I

In 1844, when young Tolstoy arrived at the age of sixteen, Mme. Yushkov informed him that he must now decide what career he should follow. For her part, she advised him to prepare himself for the Oriental faculty of the University of Kazan: nothing, she maintained, could be more suitable for a young man with a name and fortune than the diplomatic service. Leo had long envied his brothers' student dress-coats and swords; and since no career attracted him more or less than any other, he took his aunt's advice. An unforeseen disaster occurred at the examinations. Leo displayed a commendable knowledge of the Turkish and Arabic grammars, but as it happened, he proved himself to be entirely ignorant of history and even more so of geography. The future diplomat was unable to name a single seaport of France; and he blushed, silent and embarrassed, under the professor's reproachful look. But the re-examinations in September passed smoothly, and the young man finally received from the University the announcement that he was matriculated as a student. Whereupon, Mme. Yushkov dismissed Saint-Thomas and pronounced her nephew a full-grown man. Like his older brothers, he would henceforth receive a monthly allowance of so many hundred roubles, would have a room of his own in her house, and would be free to conduct his life as he pleased.

What manner of man was the young Tolstoy at the time when he thus sailed out into life? An observer who had not seen him for five or six years would hardly have recognized him now. Not that the physical change was so great: a not yet fully matured, fleshy and muscular frame, with disproportionately large hands and feet; heavy, irregular features; a cockerel's voice vibrating between childish squeaks and a masculine tenor—all that was doubtless a logical, or rather, a chronological continuation

of the boy whom we saw at Yassnaya and in Moscow. Yet, our imaginary observer, unless he were very shrewd, would probably say that literally nothing of the boy's manner had survived in the youth. Here, for instance, is the scene of young Tolstoy's appearance in the lecture halls, as recorded by a contemporary: A clumsy, but exceedingly dignified and pompous student alights from a pretentious carriage in front of the University; he throws his fur mantle on the arm of the lackey who follows him at a respectful distance, and enters the building. Amused and engaged by this figure whom they know to be Count Tolstoy, several students attempt to talk to him, but are crushed by contemptuous glances and monosyllabic replies; they step back, dissembling their embarrassment behind ironical grimaces. Without paying any more attention to them, the count makes his way to the "aristocratic" bench of the lecture hall, where only French is spoken and only the inheritors of aristocratic names are suffered as equals.

Tolstoy plunges headlong into the *beau-monde* of Kazan as soon as he dons a student's uniform. And all those who happen to meet him at a ball given by the Governor or at a reception held by the Marshal of Nobility agree on this characterization: "A very unpleasant young gentleman, unusually haughty and proud. . . . Most of the time he keeps silent, as though he were constantly afraid of committing his dignity; this makes one feel uneasy in his presence."

Finally, our figurative observer would be still more astonished by some of young Leo Nicholayevich's speeches. Tolstoy believes that mankind is divided into two groups, "men *comme il faut* and *comme il ne faut pas*"; and he does not dissimulate his contempt for the second group—that is to say, for those who have dirty nails and a bad French accent. Soon, conversations like this will take place:

LEO [*to his brother NICHOLAS, indicating a well-dressed gentleman in the street*]: What a scoundrel!

NICHOLAS [*astonished*]: A scoundrel? Why?

LEO: He wears no gloves.

NICHOLAS [*with a kindly, ironical smile*]: Well? What of it?

LEO [*blushing*]: But . . . Well . . . I mean . . .

No one in the family surmises what cruel, tragi-comical sufferings are concealed behind this show of arrogance, bad taste and snobbishness. The young man's vanity is enormous—it is a truly inexorable passion. He burns with the desire to conquer society, to reign in it, to be talked of. Still greater, however, is his timidity. He spends whole hours in front of a looking-glass, struggling desperately against a thick brush of rebellious hair on the top of his head; rehearsing all imaginable postures which might lend an air of aristocratic distinction to his husky, muscular body; working out in advance the tone of ease and assurance in which he will presently speak. Yet, on entering a fashionable drawing-room, he upsets a chair or a table, and the more he tries to avoid doing so, the more certainly he upsets it. And having upset it, he blushes; his courage leaves him and he conceals his hopeless embarrassment behind a stony, idiotically proud grimace. Home in his bed, he lies awake for tragic, bitter hours, even shedding tears in his vexation: his abnormally developed proneness to analysis magnifies his unimportant social blunders into unforgivable social crimes, and he earnestly believes that all—yes, all!—is lost to him. Men whom he admires and envies, including his elegant brother Serge, will now scorn him. They call him “The Bear”—he knows that, and they are right; for “The Bear,” the miserable, timid fool, he certainly is. Why is it that he cannot dance without treading on the toes of his partners? Why, the other night, in a sudden and reckless attempt to attract attention to himself, did he utter an obvious lie? Why can he not be himself? Yet, his tenacity is even greater than his timidity. The disasters he suffers on the social battlefield only increase his desire to conquer both society and, above all, his timidity, which seems to be still more unconquerable. “More dignity: to speak more loudly and more distinctly and to continue, even in spite of embarrassment, the conversation which has been begun . . .”—later, he will jot down such sentences in his note-book and, with these rules of the game in mind, will rush again to a reception, from a reception to a ball, etc., only once more to upset a chair and to suffer a night of agony again in his bed.

The aging Mlle. Yergolsky, visiting her nephews in Kazan, is probably the only person who, watching Leo, guesses the cause

of his clumsiness, his blunderings and blushings; and her understanding heart aches for him. What could cure the youth; what could transform him into a real gentleman? The answer is clear to her—an intrigue with an experienced woman of society. Remaining alone with him, she shakes her gray head and says, as though casually: "*Mon cher Léon, rien ne forme un jeune homme comme une liaison avec une femme comme il faut.*" The kind-hearted old maiden does not know that whenever her dear Léon falls in love with a society woman—and that happens, as a rule, every second night—his timidity reaches such a degree that he flees headlong from the house which the subject of his secret passion is expected to enter. The difficulty is that the young man not only knows that he is ill-favored, but he further exaggerates his ugliness in his imagination, as he exaggerates all his defects. A few years later, he will write, remembering this time: "I believed that there could be no happiness in the world for a man with such a broad nose, such thick lips and small gray eyes as mine, and I implored God to perform a miracle—to grant me good looks. I would have bartered for a beautiful face all I had in the present and all my expectations of the future." Let it be noted that the sufferings caused by the realization of one's ugliness will be a subject recurring in almost all the masterpieces which the great Tolstoy will afterwards write.

III

Between lectures and receptions, Leo finds time to read voluminously. And in his reading and meditations, as in his ball-room exploits, there are incongruities; there is youthful, passionate naïveté and, above all, a characteristic tendency to extremes. At a very early age, he absorbed Voltaire, and the creed of his fathers, in which he had been brought up, evaporated, quickly and easily, under the poisoned sarcasms of the old cynic. It is true that, going to the examinations, he stops at a church, prays for a few minutes and lights a candle before an ikon. This was done, however, "as a matter of precaution" and did not prevent the youth from being confident that he was a convinced atheist.

A much deeper impression is made upon him by Rousseau, whose twenty volumes, including "The Musical Dictionary," he reads and rereads time and again. Man freed of culture with its distortions and vices; mankind obeying the dictates of Reason,

Truth and Goodness; the pure, unspoiled Émile, living in the paradise of the unselfish, chaste Nature—what a wonderful revelation is all this to the snob who, only an hour before, had walked with a stony face through the portals of the University, refusing to acknowledge the greetings of his democratic comrades! He falls in love with Rousseau, just as passionately as he had previously fallen in love with society; he wears a miniature of the great rationalist on his chest under his shirt and sheds happy, noble tears over many a page of the “Confessions.” He is still amazingly, girlishly, sentimental—in this, “*Lyova-ryova*” has not changed. Once, overflowing with his idol’s teachings, he decides to do away with cultured life and to revert to primitive simplicity. The first thing to be abolished, of course, is the costume; presently, he calls his serf-tailor (all this happens during a summer vacation in Yassnaya) and orders him to make him a long gray cloak. For the next five or six days, Tolstoy wears this hideous attire with nothing beneath it; it serves him also as a night-gown, as a quilt and as a towel. Ladies who come to visit Mlle. Yergolsky and who see her nephew thus dressed—or rather, undressed—are scandalized to the point of hysterics. Of course, all this is soon forgotten, and Leo is again “*un jeune homme comme il faut*.” Yet is not this first “philosophic escapade” of his prophetic? What is, however, most remarkable, is that the youth is equally passionate and sincere in his philosophic pretensions and in his after-the-ball sufferings; in this Quixotism there is doubtless a strong tincture of the comical, yet perhaps there is in it the first hint of the pathetic, as well.

The ideas which Tolstoy at this time confides to his note-book all breathe Rousseau’s spirit. “Let your reason guide you,” he jots down, “and it will disclose to you your real vocation in life; it will trace for you the rules by which to abide. All that which is in harmony with man’s reason must be in harmony with the whole universe, for man’s reason is a part of the universe, and a part cannot contradict the whole.” Or further: “What is the purpose of man’s life? It is to contribute, as best he can, to the harmonious development of all things existing. I would be the most unfortunate of mortals if I did not discover this purpose. . . . All my life henceforward will be devoted to the fulfilment of this idea.” Yet, in the maze of these pale, nebulous, childish commonplaces, there sparkle sometimes the first hints of genius.

Once, while Serge is not in, his friend Shuvalov comes to see him, with wine-bottles sticking out of his pockets. He is received by Leo, who takes him to his room and bids him wait there. Shuvalov's glance falls on a manuscript which lies on the table. Perceiving that it contains "bits of reflection," he, with Leo's permission, begins to read it. "That is interesting! From where have you copied it?" he asks, a few minutes later. Leo answers timidly that he wrote it himself. Thereupon, Shuvalov bursts into laughter, calls Leo "a liar," and, saying that he has no time to wait for Serge, leaves, rattling his bottles.

The manuscript in question has not survived to our days; yet, we know that the ideas set forth in it were to the effect that time and space do not exist outside of our mind; that they are but forms of our perception, and that, consequently, the universe as we see it is not a reality, but merely a figment of our own mind. Small wonder that Shuvalov did not believe: the sixteen-year-old snob had arrived in the course of a spare hour at the same conclusions that the greatest European philosophers, from Plato to Kant, arrived at through years of concentration. He did not lie—these were his own ideas, for at that time he knew nothing about philosophy.

IV

Such is the young Tolstoy when, emancipated by his sixteen years and student's sword from the patronage of Aunt Yushkov, he sails out into the world. At night, alone in his room, he dreams. Freedom, independence, the position of a grown-up man . . . What will he do with his life? Wealth? Glory? Power? Fame? Yes, these are great temptations, indeed. Then the old childhood dream awakens in him: he is a general, a young hero, covered with wounds; the Emperor comes to him, and says: "I thank you, Tolstoy! You have saved Russia!" He is a little ashamed of this vision, but it is pleasant, very pleasant; and his imagination, which runs riot, embroiders pathetic variations on this subject. Yet what lures him most is the image of a woman, the most beautiful woman in the world—an irresistible synthesis of all the good-looking chamber-maids and society women in whose presence he has ever blushed. And he sees himself in the rôle of a Don Juan whom no virtue can resist—fortunately, the oppressing consciousness of "such a broad nose and thick lips" escapes him, in this magical land where every-

thing is possible. But no; a minute later, he blushes for his wickedness: virtue and self-sacrifice are loftier than that. His disinterested labor will wrest mankind from the throes of sin and evil and lead it to a happy future; men will pronounce his name with eyes full of grateful tears. Here, however, he realizes that he is himself weak and ignorant. Besides, what is good and what is evil? Does he know the difference between them? But this doubt vanishes as quickly as it comes. The most beautiful woman, the gratitude of mankind and hundreds of other dreams fuse together; contradictions vanish—everything seems possible and, overcome with emotion, he thanks God—in whom only a few minutes before he did not believe—for what? For this wonderful future? his sixteen years?—he hardly knows himself. Moonlight and the cool night air pour from the garden into the room, and Leo falls asleep with the secure conviction that tomorrow “it” will “begin”; that something very important will happen and his dreams will come true.

Who knows? Perhaps every man has, without admitting it, at least some of these dreams and feelings which are merely an expression of his natural appetite for life. And it cannot be doubted that a young man is especially likely to have them. But Leo had them in an exceptionally acute, violent and self-assertive form. His youthful appetite for life was tremendous.

CHAPTER III

RUNNING ON ROCKS

I

At the end of his third year at the University, Leo comes to realize that his academic affairs are desperately confused. It has all happened like this:

During his first year at the institution, he had earnestly believed that it would be absurd for a Count Tolstoy to study with too much zeal. A few bottles of champagne uncorked at a little gathering of chosen comrades and a few ironical remarks about the professors—such was his conception of a good student's duties. Acting in accordance with this theory, he hardly ever opened a text-book and failed most shamefully at the examinations. It would be too humiliating to remain in the first course for the second year; hence, he passed from the Oriental to the Juridical faculty.

Here he managed to pass to the second course. Yet he still worked very little, and that reluctantly—although for a different reason. He had suddenly come to despise this "dry and useless official wisdom" of which he had hardly any comprehension, but which, as he assured his comrades, "could contribute in no way to a man's moral or mental development." What was this—an impudent posture of vanity wounded at the examinations, or the valid protest of a mind which instinctively sought after something which it could not find in text-books? Probably it was both, for in the youthful Tolstoy such seemingly irreconcilable elements were often fused. Whatever it may have been, his professors looked upon him with undisguised dissatisfaction, and noted in the record-books under his name: "Exceedingly lazy; attends lectures irregularly; is neither capable nor diligent, etc." It is true that, in the course of the third year, he became absorbed in a composition on the subject of "Montesquieu's 'Esprit des Lois' and Catherine the Great's 'Instructions,'" which one of the

professors had required him to write. Forgetting his contempt of all things academic, he surrounded himself with source-books and began working zealously. But he could not do anything half way. Now, immersed in Montesquieu, he banished from his notice with lordly disdain the less absorbing subjects in which he was soon to be examined. When, at last, his laggard attention turned to these, he understood that a new disaster awaited him at the examinations.

Meanwhile, the elder Tolstoy brothers are graduated from the University. Joyous and excited, each with plans and ambitions of his own, they prepare to leave Kazan. Leo contemplates them with envy and remorse. Moreover, he knows how badly he will miss them. With the modest, intelligent and very well-read Nicholas, he often talks and philosophizes for hours; the good-looking Serge, one of the most fashionable young men in Kazan, he aspires to resemble and imitates assiduously; Dimitry, a strange and uncommunicative young man, who displays symptoms of religious mania, spends hours in the church and gives all his money to the poor, he often teases and annoys. Yet he loves all three—the family feeling has always been very strong within him—and he feels that to part from them will be a great sorrow.

The fortune which the young Tolstoy inherited from their parents has hitherto been administered as a whole by Mme. Yushkov. Now, as the elder boys are leaving Kazan, it is decided to divide it among the five heirs. In keeping with the Tolstoy tradition, Leo, the youngest son, receives of the five Tolstoy estates the one in which the family had formerly lived—that is, Yassnaya Polyana, with its four adjoining villages and about eight hundred serfs, of both sexes. This is not a large fortune—it will hardly yield Leo more than five thousand roubles a year; yet it is certainly pleasant to feel himself an independent country squire.

A gigantic scheme ripens in Leo's mind. He will leave the University without finishing his course and go to Yassnaya. There, in two years, he will hew out of himself the man he desires to be. His retirement will resemble the withdrawal of an ascetic to the desert. He is ignorant—of this, he is fully aware. Hence, the first thing to do is to pump into his mind as much knowledge as possible. Presently he works out a program of his studies. "What will be the purpose of my life, in the course of these two

years?" he asks himself; and answers: "1.—To learn the whole University course of the juridical sciences, so as to graduate afterwards. 2.—To learn practical medicine, and also a part of theoretical medicine. 3.—To attain perfection in the French, Russian and German languages, and to master English, Italian and Latin. 4.—To learn agriculture, practical as well as theoretical. 5.—To master history, geography and statistics. 6.—To master the gymnasium course in mathematics. 7.—To write a thesis. 8.—To attain to a fair degree of perfection in music and painting. 9.—To become acquainted with the natural sciences. 10.—To write compositions in all these subjects."

All this, in two years? One wonders why Leo did not add to it the foundation of a new religion and the conquest of the Ottoman Empire.

Is, however, "mental development alone sufficient for man"? Certainly not. Morals and character are infinitely more important. This, too, will be taken care of at Yassnaya. Leo has long since attempted to draft for himself the exemplary "rules of behavior" according to which he must fashion his life. He has written down a number of them, and they are indeed excellent. There are among them such pearls as, for instance: "Despise wealth, honors and public opinion, unless they are justified by reason"; "So live that your love of mankind shall express itself every day in some good action," etc. The only difficulty with his formula is the circumstance that, for some inexplicable reason, he has thus far never succeeded in abiding by a single one of his own rules. This, however, has in no wise shaken his faith in the essential excellence of these same rules. And now, while preparing to go to Yassnaya, he decides that he will not only set down many more of them there, but also work out a detailed plan disposing of the whole of his subsequent life, to the end of his days. How wonderful! Like an architect he will design the elaborately perfect edifice or, better still, the temple which he shall erect out of his base life; and, like a brick-layer, he will bring it every day nearer and nearer to its roof, to its cupola, by piling virtue upon virtue, brick of knowledge upon brick of knowledge! What a triumph of reason! Yes, as soon as he is arrived at Yassnaya, he will work out this splendid plan!



TOLSTOY, THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT

The carriage drives between the solid white columns of the gate, into the long alley of lime trees in full blossom. It crosses the park, with its lakes and flower-beds; and young Tolstoy again stands in the imposing mansion of his ancestors. Yassnaya Polyana greets him with myriad reminiscences and with a long row of bowing and smiling faces: Prasskovya Issayevna, the old housekeeper, who nursed his mother, who scolded him and gave him cookies and who has always been very proud of being a serf of the Tolstoys; the little blind old man who was bought to tell fairy-tales to the late old countess, and many, many others, whom he has known and loved since the first years of his life, surround him, kiss his hands, ask for news of his brothers, and tell him of the latest happenings in the village.

What happens in Yassnaya? Documents bearing on this page of Tolstoy's life are comparatively scant. Yet, putting together that which, a few years later, Tolstoy will write in his admittedly autobiographic novel, "The Morning of a Country Squire" (Prince Nekhlyudov, its hero, is Tolstoy himself in but a slight disguise), with that which, in his old days, he will say to his biographers, we can form a fairly complete and reliable picture of the events of these months.

Apparently, the first days are spent in conversation with the serf-overseers who have been in charge of the estate, in the verification of bills, and in similar occupations. Then, happy, preoccupied with his plans and affairs, all beaming with hope, health and springtime dreams, he goes to the village and stops, one by one, at the cabins of his peasants. His joyous exuberance is somewhat chilled by the filth and misery in which Ivan's family lives; the fact that David's cabin is so old that it will certainly crumble away within a day or a week, and the knowledge that David has no money with which to repair it, fill him with anxiety; and when Savely tells him, with quiet fatalism, that his family has long since been starving, and that his old woman actually starved to death, the young country squire is filled with horror and chagrin. And all these men are his! He is their master and owner! If so, who is responsible for these atrocities? How is it that heretofore he has had no knowledge of them? Buddha drives out of the palace; Buddha's eyes behold human misery; and, in conse-

quence of what he has observed, a decision ripens in Buddha's mind.

Books, "rules of behavior," music, the juridical sciences? Yes, but those alone cannot be the main purpose of his life. He will remain in Yassnaya and devote all his life (yes, all his life, for he never thinks in terms of weeks or months) to his serfs. Indeed, where can he find a better field for his noble work than here? Lying under an oak, he watches the white clouds drift in a fantastic chain of images and figures across the azure sky, and pictures to himself his sweet, his happy sacrifice. "To educate that simple, receptive, unspoiled class of people; to save them from poverty; to impart to them the education which I am so fortunate as to possess; to cure them of the vices which have grown out of ignorance and superstition; to develop their morals; to teach them to love that which is good—what a brilliant and happy future! And [here a charming little selfish note creeps into this symphony of self-denial] I, who shall do that for my own happiness, shall be rewarded by their gratitude! With every day I shall draw nearer and nearer to the purpose which I have set for myself. Wonderful life! How could I have failed to perceive all this before?" Thus, for the time being, the vision of "grateful humanity" has won a sweeping victory over all his other dreams.

For two or three months, the young country squire works furiously. His occupations are all scheduled by hours, days and weeks, and they are so numerous that every minute of his time is crowded—he can hardly indulge himself a swim in the lake without robbing his charitable pursuits, or music, or agriculture, of a precious particle of an hour. All is efficiency and order in his life. No sooner does he cease to stuff his reluctant brain with Latin or English vocables than he has to force his clumsy fingers into the quick and complicated passages of a Field sonata. Is he happy?

Apparently, Mlle. Yergolsky had laughed upon learning that her nephew had decided to devote his life to his peasants. The young Tolstoy had been somewhat taken aback by this levity, but certainly not discouraged. Indeed, he is doing his best, sparing neither effort nor money. He grants lavish subsidies to his "subjects." He puts them in full possession of a part of his forest. He strictly prohibits his overseers to inflict corporal punishment

upon them. He spends hours in their cabins, inquiring into their needs and misfortunes. Finally, in one of the outbuildings of the estate, he organizes and opens a school for their children. It is true that he might do one thing more—he might liberate them, for legally, it is possible to do so. Yet, strange as it may be, this idea never occurs to him. To own serfs, as his fathers and forefathers had owned them before him, is too natural a thing to be thought about.

But what is the attitude of the peasants toward the young reformer? As might be expected, it is decidedly hostile. When, with the noblest possible intentions, he offers them money and grain, they fall on their knees, effusive in their thanks, and then scratch the backs of their heads and ask themselves what might be the trick and how the young *barin* (lord) now proposed to dupe them; and when they at last understand that he is not making them the victims of a deceptive game, they tell themselves that he is merely a fool, and trick him instead by feigning greater miseries than they actually bear. When he prohibits his overseers from beating them, they merely lose all respect for the “youngster”—although it is true that, as soon as his back is turned, the overseers, fully aware of the values of a time-honored institution, re-establish it by using their own judgment—and their fists. Finally, when he opens his school, they are merely angered. A school? What a fancy! Besides, the young country squire has overlooked the fact that it is they who, in the final account, must pay for it with their labor. And the more he tries to be human, the more he tells them, blushing the while, that he desires to help them, the more emphatically they praise his maternal grandfather, Prince Volkonsky, the illustrious *Général-en-Chef* of Catharinian days, who survives in their memory as an ideal *barin*. That haughty, dictatorial old prince, who dared to disobey even the great Empress, had them beaten when they deserved it, but not otherwise, and helped them when they really needed it, but not otherwise. Of all the riddles rampant upon the Russian soil, the Russian peasant is probably the most complicated. He will accept kindness, but he can admire only strength—of will, of character, of the fist—especially if the possessor of this strength uses it with moderation. He will forgive his master anything, even cruelty (“If he does not beat, he does not love,” peasant women say of their husbands), but certainly not weakness nor

incompetence. He will willingly profit by rosy, humanitarian, nebulous idealism; but he will certainly lose all respect for the master who is guilty of it. And he cannot help despising those whom he can dupe.

Perceiving that his "reforms" are opposed by an unexplainable passive resistance, Tolstoy feels humiliated, offended and embarrassed. There are times when, while he is talking to some Ivan, he loses his temper; then his fist slips from the highly moral hook which had formerly restrained it and makes rapid play upon the jaw of his interlocutor. Such moments are followed by bitter repentance, but what of that? Reforms, dreams—it is clear that nothing has come of any of them. What is still worse, it becomes evident that his impetuous appetite for life cannot feed itself for long on such a highly vegetarian food as self-sacrifice and virtue. He suffocates in the strait-jacket of his "rules." He pants for "the delights of life." And, in the fall of the same year, 1847, he throws it all to the dogs and gallops away to Moscow and Petersburg.

III

Mlle. Yergolsky, who has meanwhile come to Yassnaya, and Serge, who lives near-by on his own estate, Pirogovo, have little news from Leo. They hear that he is seen a great deal in the best aristocratic salons of the two capitals—at the Princes Gorchakovs' (who are his relatives through the late old countess, née Princess Gorchakov), at the Princes Volkonskys', at the Koloshins', the Yevreinovs', etc. Rumor also has it that he lives a rather dissipated life; by this, however, they are encouraged, rather than grieved: for every young man is supposed to sow wild oats, and it is high time for Leo to scatter his portion. The hope is expressed that this will at length cure him of his "whims." At last there comes a letter, which seems to corroborate these suppositions:

"DEAR SERGE,

"I am writing to you from Petersburg, where I have decided to settle *forever*. I will live here, be graduated from the University and begin my bureaucratic career. To put it briefly, Petersburg life has a good influence upon me: I am becoming business-like.

"I know you won't believe me. You will say: 'That's an old story—he is changing again for the twentieth time,' and you will

once more call me a 'good-for-nothing.' No! This time, I have changed in a different manner than before. Before, I used to say: 'Why should I not change?' Now, I perceive that I *have* changed, and am announcing it to you.

"The chief thing about me is this: I have come to realize that one cannot build one's life on philosophy, and that one should live a balanced existence; that is to say, one must be a practical man. This, you will concede, marks a considerable progress!"

We do not know how Count Serge received this news. But before long, a second epistle came from the "practical man":

"DEAR SERGE! *Read this letter when you are alone!*

"I am sure that you are even now calling me a 'good-for-nothing' and that, in so doing, you are perfectly right. I came to Petersburg without any purpose, have not done what I ought to do, have instead spent a great deal of money, and now I am heavily in debt. Silly, oh, how silly! You do not know how it vexes me! The main thing is *the debts*, which I *must* pay *as soon as possible*, for if I fail to do so, it will entail a new loss of money, and my reputation will be impaired. I will need, until I have received my revenues, 3500 roubles, 1200 roubles for the mortgage on the estate, 1600 roubles for debts and 700 roubles to live on. I know you will say it is horrible, but how can I help it? Every one does foolish things at some period of his life. I had to pay for my foolishness and philosophy (there was no one around to pull my ears!), so I am paying for them now."

Debts? That is strange! But the news reaching Yassnaya Polyana soon explains everything. The young man is said to gamble heavily, and to spend much more time in the society of the gipsy girls than he ought. "Spent" a great deal of money is evidently a euphemism for "gambled away." Once more Mlle. Yergolsky shakes her gray head: how is it that she did not foresee that in the sowing of wild oats, as in anything else, her dear Léon would display more zeal and whimsicality than young men usually do? She also learns that he has again become very intimate with Islenyev and Ogaryov, friends of his childhood, whom he has not seen in a long while, and who are said to be reckless young debauchees. Hence, in a friendly letter, she endeavors, with all the precautions of diplomacy, to divert her nephew



A GROUP OF WRITERS IN ST. PETERSBURG, IN 1856

Top row: L. Tolstoy, D. Grigorovich

Bottom row: I. Goncharov, I. Turgenev, A. Druzhinin, A. Ostrovsky

from these two gentlemen. Tolstoy, however, answers her, not without irritation:

"Pourquoi êtes vous tellement montée contre Islenyev," he writes, *"si c'est pour m'en détourner—c'est inutile puisqu'il n'est pas à Moscou. Tout ce que vous me dites au sujet de la perversité du jeu est très vrai et me revient souvent à l'esprit, c'est pourquoi je crois je ne jouerai plus. 'Je crois,' mais j'espère bientôt vous dire pour sûr."*

"For sure," however, he does not say; and new requests for money hasten, one upon another, to Yassnaya.

Soon Mlle. Yergolsky is able to form a fairly accurate idea of her prodigal nephew's life in the two capitals. Judging by the letters which he writes, it consists of kaleidoscopic changes of most variegated plans, which invariably miscarry, and of rash undertakings, which regularly prove abortive. All this is seasoned with an easily distinguishable admixture of fast living and carousing.

Indeed, the old maiden, so to speak, has to keep her eyes and mind constantly in motion in order to follow Tolstoy's rapid postings from one thing to another. To-day, he writes that, after a sleepless week of study, he has actually begun to carry out his idea of completing his course: he has gone to the Petersburg University, and has satisfactorily passed two examinations. To-morrow, however, he informs his aunt that he "has given it all up" and is dreaming of a "military career": it is the year 1848, when Emperor Nicholas I is preparing to march his troops against the Hungarian revolutionists, and Tolstoy has "definitely decided to enter a regiment of the Imperial Guard, in order to take part in the war"—the circumstance that the purpose of the campaign is not exactly Libertarian does not seem to trouble the future anarchist. But a few days later, this too is forgotten: the young man has again "lost heavily" (at the gambling table, of course) and in order to restore his budget, he prepares "to go into business," in spite of his aristocratic contempt for all commerce: he wants to take a lease on a post-station and have his men exploit it. Then, Mlle. Yergolsky is informed that he misses by a hair's breadth galloping away on an absolutely unnecessary trip to Siberia. It had happened thus: while seeing off Count Valerian Tolstoy, his distant cousin, who is attached to the staff of the Governor of Siberia, he sits in Count Valerian's carriage and drives

with him for a few minutes; suddenly, the idea of going to Siberia flashes through his mind, and he is so fascinated by it that (as he puts it) "I would certainly have done so, if I had had a hat on my head."

Some time later, he not only "definitely decides to take," but actually takes a position at the Provincial Assembly of Noble Deputies in Tula, and serves there for a short interval; but he soon grows heartily weary of the red tape in which his activities are involved, and again rushes away to Moscow and Petersburg, whence new reams of "definite decisions" taken "for the rest of my life" and forgotten overnight come to Mlle. Yergolsky. And so it goes on for another two or three years.

IV

It is the winter of 1850-1851. Tolstoy, who is now twenty-two, lives in his small apartment in Moscow. He gets up late (that is to say, he wants to get up early, but, strange as it may be, he never quite succeeds in doing so); he reads for a while; then, he spends a couple of hours on horseback in a *manège*, or goes to a fashionable gymnasium (gymnastics, imported from England, are in vogue in Russia's capitals); he dines at the Princess Gorchakov's or with some other of his friends (for these are innumerable); then—a ball or the theater, and after that, a suburban restaurant, with a chorus of gipsy-girls and with champagne, or even a still merrier place. Does he enjoy it? Without doubt, he loves it all. Yet—a portentous thing! Living at Yasnaya four years ago and accumulating virtues, he had gasped for "the delights of the world," while now, immersed in "the delights of the world," he feels that they are not what he really wants, and he gasps for—what? He hardly knows himself. Coming home exhausted, with his head aching from too much wine, he tells himself that "it all must change." But on the morrow, it starts all over again.

For three and a half years (since 1847) he has not confided his thoughts to his note-book; now he resumes that habit, and this note-book of his soon transforms itself into a regularly kept and even meticulous diary. What does he record in it? Everything—from his aspirations and his dreams to his daily expenditures.

"December 8 (1851) . . . My former foolishness and the neces-

sity of attending to my affairs have borne their fruit. I do not build castles in Spain any longer, nor do I conceive plans for the realization of which no human forces would suffice . . . To put it briefly, I have gotten over that; I have grown older. It even seems to me that I have become too dry; only sometimes, especially when I go to bed, finer sentiments again overcome me. The same thing happens when I am drunk; it is true, though, that I have sworn not to get drunk any more . . .

"In order to improve my financial affairs, I must:

"1.—Secure admission to a group of gamblers and, if I happen to have money, gamble;

"2.—Be as much as possible in society and, if I meet the girl I need, get married;

"3.—Find a position;

"Also, a fourth means is now available—to borrow some money from Kireyevsky. Neither of these four things contradicts the other three, and I must act."

Some days later:

"Am living like a regular beast, although not in a very disorderly manner. Have forsaken all of my occupations, and my spirits are very low. . . . To-morrow—write, read and play the piano in the morning, or to work on the composition on music; at night—to the gipsies."

Then:

". . . Looked at myself too often in the mirror; that was an absurd physical vanity which is ridiculous and can lead to no good. Ate too much at dinner—gluttony . . . At the Koloshins', went out of the drawing-room clumsily, with too much haste; wanted to say something polite to the lady of the house, but it didn't come out. At the *manège*, I let myself be carried away by *mauvaise humeur* and, having noticed the lady [A lady to whom, without knowing her, he took a fancy for a day or two—AUTHOR] forgot my own affairs. Tried to imitate Prince Gorchakov—shame! Did I tell any lies? Don't remember just now. Probably, yes . . .

"All my blunders can be traced to the following weaknesses: 1.—Indecision, lack of character; . . . 4.—*Fausse honte*, that is to say, the fear of doing something that others will deem inappropriate; . . . 7.—Proneness to imitate others; 8.—Inconsistency; 9.—Light-mindedness."

He resuscitates also another forgotten practise of his—he begins again to compose “rules of behavior,” and composes them with even more zeal than before: now it is a systematic and sustained effort (which, of course, invariably fails) to control himself literally from head to foot. Soon there appears in his diary a whole code of laws, a veritable constitution. “Rule: to give up smoking . . . Rule: In keeping with the requirements of religion, to have no women . . . Rules of behavior in society: to seek the company of persons who stand higher on the social ladder than I . . . Always to dance with the most important ladies . . . If embarrassed, not to lose my presence of mind, but continue the conversation . . . To be as cold as possible, and to show no signs of emotion.”

What is this strange assemblage of contradictions? Is it possible that he still should not know what he wants? Is it normal that he still should believe in the practicability of his “rules”? And how can the idealist, who had tried to “sacrifice himself” for his peasants and who now upbraids himself for his “gluttony” and “physical vanity,” talk with such calculating detachment of marriage as one means of “improving his financial situation,” the other means being gambling, borrowing, and the like? Let it be noted that such a marriage is not merely a transient fancy. For a month or two, he mentally sizes up the fortunes of all the society girls he knows, and relinquishes the idea only because one of his brothers persuades him that it is not a very laudable purpose. Not everything, however, in the diary is comical, nor everything in the rules, ridiculous. There is something there which stands beyond the comical and the ridiculous. This something is an important symptom. Tolstoy is weary of the continuous disorder in his inner-life and of the rushing, failing and escapading career of his practical life. He instinctively grasps at order—order in his thoughts, in his affairs, in everything. It is for this reason that he needs his diary: day after day, he scrutinizes himself in it as in a mirror; as though asking himself with a frown: “Where am I, after all? And who am I?” He is an anomaly; but out of the chaos of his character there arises something which longs to transform it into a cosmos. And this controlling and regulating hand which writes the “rules” is relentless, obstinate and even characteristically pedantic. Tolstoy is inconstant in everything; but in the desire to master himself he is, and will always remain, amazingly consistent.

Nor is this all; there is yet another important symptom that has appeared in his life.

v

During all these years, Tolstoy often goes—at Christmas, Easter and in the summer—to Yassnaya, where he spends weeks, and sometimes even months, in the company of Mlle. Yergolsky. These visits are always a joy both for the aunt and the nephew. Fifty years later, standing on the brink of the grave, he will thus depict them in his unfinished "Autobiography":

"I remember the long autumn and winter nights spent with her; they are among my happiest recollections . . . There was, in her room, a comfortable, embroidered easy-chair in which she always bade me sit . . . And sitting in it, I could very well say:

*"Wer darauf sitzt, der ist glücklich,
Und der Glückliche bin ich."*

"After a bad life . . . with cards, gipsies, hunting parties and all manner of stupid vanity, I come back to Yassnaya and enter her room. We kiss each other as of old, and shake hands: I, her dear, little, energetic hand; she, my dirty, vicious one. Then I exchange a few words with her, in French, this also being an old habit; I greet Natalya Petrovna [Mlle. Yergolsky's companion] and sink into the comfortable easy-chair. She knows all that I have been doing and does not approve of it, yet she will never reproach me, invariably preserving her affectionate kindness. Sitting there, I read, meditate, or listen to her conversation with Natalya Petrovna. The two old women talk of the past, lay solitary games of cards, jest about this or that, or speak of the omens which they have happened to observe. And both of them laugh, especially my aunt, with the kind, childish laughter of old age, which still rings in my ears . . ."

The more Tolstoy sees of her, the more he admires her. Sometimes, when he comes to her room later than usual, her large, dark eyes shine with a quiet, yet solemn light, and he knows that she has been praying. She never tells him of her piety, yet he knows that she is deeply religious, that her faith is unshakable as a rock. The only dogma of the Church which she cannot accept is that of retribution for sins in the next world: "*Dieu,*" she says, with deep conviction, "*qui est la bonté même, ne peut pas vouloir nos souffrances.*" Tolstoy admires her impeccable

French, her quiet, innate dignity, her numberless little prejudices and superstitions of the patriarchal age—the prejudices and superstitions in which reside the strength and the fascination of that age. She is a living chronicle of the Tolstoy family. He often questions her about his mother, and as she tells him of the late countess, he usually begins to snifle and tears come to his eyes, for, strange as it may be, the dissipated young man worships the memory of her who brought him into this world with a most sentimental, almost religious adoration—with that quality of adoration which is probably possible only with regard to things or beings we have never seen.

Mlle. Yergolsky is poor, and sometimes she asks her dear Léon to give her money for candies—sweets are her cardinal, perhaps her solitary, weakness. Often, in answer to such requests, the young man turns around rather languidly and says, not without irritation: “You know quite well that I have very little money!” But this never diminishes the warmth of their relationship. In his affairs, Tolstoy always seeks her advice; or else, he dreams aloud in her presence, building sumptuous castles in the air with majestic ease. Listening to him, the old maiden raises her eyebrows and says: “*Mon cher*, with your imagination you certainly ought to write novels!” To write novels? At first, he takes it as a jest. But no; Mlle. Yergolsky means it! The best career for him, in her opinion, would be to become the *aide-de-camp* of some prominent general, or, still better, of the Emperor himself—there is nothing impossible about such an ambition for a young man of his name and connections. She knows, however, that—she puts it mildly—with his character, it would be rather difficult. If so, why not become a writer? Times have changed: even decent people write, nowadays.

To become a writer! During the long autumn and winter nights at Yassanaya, he contemplates this idea. He has tried so many things! Why not try this, too?

VI

Living in Moscow during the winter of 1850-1851, Tolstoy tries for the first time to follow Mlle. Yergolsky's advice. Not that he wants to write something that would be published. No! He merely wants to test himself. “What will come of it? How is it, anyway, that people go about writing?”—such seem to be the

questions underlying his first attempts. Between the enumerations of "clumsy bows at the Koloshins'" and of "gluttony and other vices," there appear in his diary notes like this: "To-morrow—get up early and write from 8 to 10 . . ." or: "After coming home, wrote for a while . . ."

At first, he works on a story of gipsy life. What kind of a story is it? We do not know. His carousing has certainly furnished him with enough first-hand information to equip him for such a theme. Yet, for one reason or another, he soon gives it up, and no fragment of it survives.

Then, in the first months of 1851, a second attempt is made. He does not want to "invent"; his deliberate purpose is to "note"—an idea rather unusual for his time. What if he "notes" in all detail the thoughts, impressions and sentiments that have passed through his mind in the course of the last night? How will it look on paper? He decides to use fictitious names, yet one easily discerns behind them living men and autobiographical details. He tells us how he goes to a friend (and we recognize Prince Gorchakov); how he courts, without hoping or even wishing to attain any palpable results, the capricious and elegant lady of the house (here again, it is impossible not to identify the person of the Princess Gorchakov); how then, after having played cards for some time, he returns home, makes entries in his diary, and retires. Well, he has written it all down. What is his impression of the results? Apparently, it is not a favorable one. In any case, he certainly does not surmise that "The Story of Yesterday"—for such is the title of this piece—is in many respects a remarkable, a truly unique work.

If, reading it now, we did not know that its author was Tolstoy, we would ascribe it to some Russian Marcel Proust. Here is a young man who has discovered in himself the capacity of, or the instrument for, analysis. Delighted with it, he analyzes everything and everybody, and does so with such skill and such keenness of perception as certainly could not be expected from the author of the naïvetés recorded in the diary. The story is without plot. It consists entirely of a verbal filigree of fleeting psychological nuances and associations, of infinitesimal vibrations of thought between the conscious and the unconscious. Does the lady of the house coquette with him? Yes and no. There are various sorts of coquetry. There is, for instance, an "imperfectly

hidden" coquetry which, as it were, keeps saying: "I may not be attractive, yet, do look at my ankles as I step into my carriage! Are they not nice?" To this, one's tacit reply usually is: "Yes, I know that they are nice, but since you display them on purpose, I am not interested." The ways of subtle coquetry are different: "What do I care! I have taken off my hat. I have done so because I am hot. And what do I care what is your opinion of it!" Then follows an "unspoken dialogue" of imperceptible, yet meaningful intonations, smiles and gestures between him and her, during which each feels the slight and enticing excitement of flirtation, while knowing the other to feel it, too. Where and when did the young Tolstoy learn to observe and, above all, to express so much?

These paragraphs strikingly remind one of "*Du côté de chez Swann*." The young beginner has discovered that style and manner, that method of spiritual infinitesimals, by which the mature Proust will win his fame in the twentieth century. But Tolstoy is apparently dissatisfied with his production. That is not the kind of writing he wants to do—to describe one's feelings and thoughts in all their detail. No, this is clumsy, garrulous and tiresome. "The world does not contain enough ink for the description of them, nor a sufficient number of compositors for the printing of them." He tosses the manuscript into a remote drawer and forgets it for good. It will be discovered and published only fourteen years after his death.

Simultaneously, another idea occurs to him. His early childhood, the memory of which is so dear to him; the happy life of the family at Yassanaya; dear, poor old Fyodor Ivanovich Rössel, with his checkered kerchief and his "History of the Seven Years' War"; the desperate struggle with Saint-Thomas; the reminiscences of that far-off age of innocence, of which he speaks so often in his conversations with Mlle. Yergolsky—why could not all this be the theme of a longer work—possibly, a novel? In his leisure hours, between the *manège* and his visits to the suburban cafés, he begins to jot down disconnected scenes of this thing and that, as his memory has preserved them for him.

An interesting fact: Tolstoy's writings, in their very inception grow out of his life, out of his own experiences and recollections.

"Chère Tante!

"Dernièrement dans un ouvrage que je lisais l'auteur disait que les premières indices du printemps agissent ordinairement sur le morale des hommes. Avec la nature qui renaît on voudrait se sentir renaître aussi, on regrette le passé, le temps mal employé, on se repent de sa faiblesse, et l'avenir nous paraît comme un point lumineux devant nous, on devient meilleur, moralement meilleur. Ceci quant à moi est parfaitement vrai; depuis que j'ai commencé à vivre indépendamment, le printemps me mettait toujours dans les bonnes dispositions, dans lesquelles je persévérais plus ou moins longtemps . . ."

This letter reaches Mlle. Yergolsky in the middle of March, and a few days later, its author appears in person at Yassnaya. Indeed, like his letter, he is in a "springtime" mood—chaste, limpid, serious. He apparently has found a new hobby—religion (his childish atheism he has long since forgotten). In any case, he tells Mlle. Yergolsky that he is working on a sermon, which he purposes to deliver in person in the church on Easter Sunday—an idea which, for one reason or another, he does not carry out. He notes at the same time that he prays every night and every morning, and that he finds night is a better time for prayer than morning. "At night, I am not afraid of myself, while in the morning, too much time is ahead of me."

One morning, upon entering the drawing-room, Tolstoy is greeted by an unexpected surprise—he finds his oldest brother awaiting him. For the last two years, Count Nicholas Nicholayevich has been serving as an artillery officer in the army fighting in the Caucasus, and this is the first time that he has come home on leave. He is animated, excited and full of the most interesting observations and war stories. In spite of his habitual modesty and restraint, he talks for hours, and talks vividly and excellently. Listening to him, the younger brother is all attention. The war for the conquest of the Caucasus, which Russia has been waging for nearly sixty years; the obstinacy and heroism with which the little Caucasian states and tribes are defending their independence; the unusual personality of their new leader, the romantic Shamil; the poetic, Asiatic, medieval, wildly adventurous character of the country and its inhabitants—it is all exceedingly fasci-

nating and novel. How could one resist such a temptation? A few days later, Tolstoy decides that he will accompany his brother when he returns to the Caucasus. The administration of the Yassnaya will be taken care of by Count Serge Nicholayevich, who will also attend to the payment of Leo's debts. Yes, the business end of it can easily be arranged. Why, then, should he hesitate?

VIII

A week before leaving Yassnaya for the Caucasus, on a fragrant April night, Tolstoy notes in his diary: "After dinner and in the evening, idled around, with a desire for women . . ." But no! He is bent upon virtue; and he writes: "Rule—To abstain."

Three nights later, he again bends over his diary. "Could not withstand the temptation any longer; made a sign to something pink which, at a distance, seemed irresistibly attractive, and opened the back door. She came in. I could not see her—disgusting, bad; I resented her, for she made me deviate from my rules. Withal, a feeling akin to hatred moved in me, akin to that hatred which one has for those to whom he cannot show that he dislikes, and who have every reason to believe that they please them. Sense of duty and disgust restrained me at first, yet . . .

"Now I feel a terrible repentance; never has that feeling been as acute within me as it is to-night. This is a sign of progress."

Once more "downfall," and, which is still worse, this time "downfall" with a female serf. To "perceive something pink and make a sign," to give to an overseer a few roubles and indicate with a nod of the head this or that girl in the crowd of serfs, is a rather usual way for an unmarried country squire to solve what men of later generations will call, in their sophisticated jargon, their "sex problem." No one close to Tolstoy bothers to inquire into the moral side of it; all seem to pass it over in silence as something admittedly natural and dignified by ancient usage. The lord usually does not force his passion upon the peasant women, nor does he need to do so: as a rule, they seem to pride themselves on this "*corvée*," preferring it to other, more difficult and less remunerative *corvées*. But Tolstoy lacks the *sancta simplicitas* of his contemporaries; to his misfortune, he cannot take things so easily and merrily. So this is how he begins his new life!

What makes his repentance especially "terrible" is the fact that he often meets at Yassnaya one Michael, a drunken postilion, whom he knows to be his half-brother. When the late Count Nicholas Ilyich had arrived at the age of sixteen, his parents drew his attention to a good-looking girl-serf—they earnestly believed that there was nothing more ruinous to a young man's health than abstinence. Michael is the natural son of this union. Drunken and ragged, he often comes to Tolstoy and, with impertinent allusions and smirks dissembled behind respectful bows, asks him for money. A confused feeling of shame, uneasiness and guilt moves in Tolstoy as he reaches into his pocket for a ten-rouble note. How is it, then, that, even in spite of this living reminder, he cannot abstain from "romances" with serfs? What a discouraging "weakness of character!" That must not be! The Caucasus is, indeed, the only resort that can cure him of his "evil habits."

IX

The two Tolstoys will be on the road for more than a month. Count Nicholas Nicholayevich has chosen the longest and, as he maintains, the most interesting route. Instead of going from Yassnaya direct to the south, they go by way of Moscow to Kazan, thence to follow the course of the Volga. At Kazan, they stop for a week and pay visits to innumerable relatives and friends. Exhilarated by the journey and forgetting, amid the variety of his new impressions, his social self-searching and his moral self-mortification, Leo Nicholayevich is in the happiest of moods: he idles gloriously and engages in all manner of escapades with the playmates of his childhood whom he meets here, rushing with delighted smiles from the house of a cousin to that of a friend, and carrying with him everywhere an irresistibly contagious atmosphere of youth and laughter. The older he will grow, the more often such moods will pervade him, and the more intoxicating and happy they will be. Once, having rung the doorbell of M. Yushkov's house, he suggests the idea of a novel contest to the friend accompanying him; which of them will climb the higher on the two trees standing near by before the door has been opened? And when, preceded by a lackey, M. Yushkov himself appears at the threshold, he is greeted by volleys of laughter from aloft. Yet, Tolstoy's sojourn at Kazan misses by a hair's breadth upsetting his whole Caucasian plan. At the house of a friend he

meets one Zinaida Modestovna Molostvov, a graceful society girl with big, astonished eyes and that charming combination of wit, humor, naïveté and sentimentality, the secret of which only young girls possess. Tolstoy falls madly in love with her. The new life? The Caucasus? But what would all that matter, if only he might marry that ethereal being! Indeed, "the declaration of love is ready to escape his lips at any minute"—yet, it does not escape them. Why? Because he is still sure that, for a man as ugly as himself, "there can be no happiness in the world"? Because of an instinctive fear of committing his freedom? For both these reasons, and for yet a third one: experienced in all the forms of love purchasable for money, he still, in spite of his twenty-two years, trembles with timidity in the presence of chaste women, idealizes them most sentimentally, and regards them all as lofty and inaccessible beings, who are not for him. "Whenever I am in love," he will write later, "it seems to me that the woman I love wears garments of bronze."

At Saratov, the brothers purchase an enormous boat; the carriage is placed in it and, with servants and hired boatmen, they float for a week down the waters of the Volga, assisted now by the sail, now by oars. The cobalt hemisphere of the sky, the majestic, sea-like river binding Russia to the steppes of Asia, the infinite breadth and width of the perspective and the spring, that Russian spring which compensates for the long winter months with such a lavish, unrestrained luxury of color, life and fragrance . . . Floating in this solemnly silent, sunlit universe, and watching the water which unfolds under the boards its intricate, meandering ripples, Tolstoy tries to draw up the balance of his life. What does he see, when he looks back and adds up all its elements? Debts, mistakes and failures. And he tells himself that he has squandered away the best six years of his youth; that, at twenty-two, he is an "aged, worn-out man," a debauchee and gambler, and that his life is hopelessly wrecked. Yet, these harsh thoughts, like the intricate ripples of the water, are but on the surface. For beneath them, deeper in the recesses of his soul, he feels the presence of such inexhaustible vitality and strength, such eternal spring, such joyful, buoyant energy, that no degree of introspection nor any persuasion of reason can make him permanently unhappy. Debt, mistakes, failures? What of them? He is in that youthful, happy mood when a young man believes

that heretofore he merely did not try hard enough to live "in earnest"; that all his previous life was, so to speak, only a rough draft and that, freshly shaven and washed, he will sit down tomorrow morning and re-copy that draft neatly and cleanly, with neither blots nor mistakes, in beautiful script. On the wild, low banks, from time to time, a wolf is seen, and in the distance are the tents of Kirghizes, nomadic Asiatic tribesmen. Suddenly, a question occurs to Tolstoy. Why is he going to the Caucasus, and what does he propose to do there? To his great astonishment, he realizes that this question had not presented itself to him before, and that, strange as it may be, he cannot now well answer it. What is this, then—one more absurdity, one more blunder? Perhaps. Indeed, very likely. It is something like that trip to Siberia, on which he did not go. But what of it? In spite of all his failures and sins, he is a very, very good young man, and the boatmen singing in the bow are very good men, and he loves himself, and these boatmen, and the resplendent cobalt hemisphere, and the water; and it is so touching, so good, so gratifying to love it all, and to live, and even to make blunders and then to repent! And, overwhelmed by his health and strength, by this unconquerable god of youth residing within him, he feels ready to close his eyes and plunge himself, with delight, courage and passion, into any undertaking, any venture, no matter how foolish or how wise, which may present itself to him in that obscure and irresistibly fascinating future toward which he is floating in this solemnly silent, sunlit universe.

CHAPTER IV

THE SWORD OR THE PEN?

I

Five riders trot down a wild, mountainous road leading to the fortress of Grozny. Among them are the non-commissioned artillery officer Count Tolstoy and his friend Sado, a "peaceful" mountaineer—that is to say, a mountaineer who has aligned himself with the Russians. Army officers in the Caucasus are strictly prohibited from separating themselves from their units and riding ahead of them: for, in this guerilla warfare, they may be attacked at any minute by the Chechen or Nogai riders, which will mean death or humiliating captivity—almost slavery—up in the mountains. But the three infantry companies are marching slowly; besides, since that prohibition has been announced, the officers make it a point of honor to infringe upon it. In any case, a distance of a mile or more separates the five officers from their men. The forts of Grozny are already in sight, when there suddenly appear on a side path some thirty Chechen riders, who hurl themselves on the little group of Russians. Three of the officers turn back and gallop toward the infantry, while Tolstoy and Sado spur on their horses to Grozny; the Chechens also divide, and the pursuit begins. A few minutes later, two of the officers racing toward the infantry are overtaken. Chechen swords hew them down from their saddles, and the Chechen horses, which speed after the third one, stamp on their bodies and trample them into the dust.

The distance separating Tolstoy and Sado from the Chechens also quickly diminishes. Should Tolstoy spur on the stallion he is riding, he will be certain to escape, for no Chechen horse can outspeed it. But, seeing that Sado is falling behind, he reins in and rides beside him. At the moment when all seems lost, when the Chechens have come within pistol-shot of their prey, a squadron of Cossacks appears on the road. The sentries at Grozny

have sounded the alarm, and the Cossacks have been sent out to rescue the riders. Tolstoy sums up the adventure in his diary: "Was pursued and conducted myself well, although too sentimentally." "Too sentimentally?" Were the thoughts which flashed through his mind in those memorable minutes "sentimental"? Tolstoy is exacting toward himself: he wants to face death not only with perfect composure, but even without "sentimental thoughts." A few lines further, he notes: "Grishka [a Cossack] told me I was pale when we arrived. . . . This so upset me that, while sleeping, I had nightmares. . . ." On the battlefield, as in fashionable salons, the slightest suspicion that others might think critically or ironically of him causes him to suffer and gives him "nightmares."

What has prompted Tolstoy to join the army? He often tries to evade this question, or to deceive himself by some palpably false, highly moralizing answer. Yet he realizes that the only truthful explanation is this: that he is fascinated by war and peril; that he cannot resist the allurements of gambling with life—that most poignant of all gambling. To master one's fear of death and to converse with nonchalance under a hail of bullets; to bend one's greedy, life-loving self to the idea of imminent death; to admire proudly one's self-control and to live in that nervous, exalted and exhilarating condition of mind to which one arises when risking one's life on the turn of the card of war—in this complex scale of virile impulses, there is an irresistible attraction for him. In spite of his neurasthenic proneness to analysis, in spite of all his wailings and self-mortifications, he is essentially a man, a sportsman, a hunter; and the stronger the physical passion with which he adores "the delights of life," the greater is the temptation to risk them, to throw them into relief by juxtaposing them with death. When he arrived at Starogladvskaya, the *stanitza* (Cossack village) in which Count Nicholas Nikolayevich's battery is stationed, his first impression was rather unfavorable and his first impulse was to remain there for a week or two in the rôle of an idle observer, and then go back home: "Silly officers, stupid boasting . . . What am I to do here?" Soon, however, his brother's battery was sent up into the mountains. Tolstoy accompanied them and took part, as a volunteer, in a battle which ensued. This experience seems to have determined his fate; he understood then that he would not leave the Caucasus.

Hence, he rode to Tiflis, passed the examinations and donned the uniform. Of course, his complaisant mind presented him with a logical—and perfectly unsound—justification of this unexpected step. "I am so glad [he wrote to Mlle. Yergolsky] that I am no longer free. This may astonish you, but I have long since had too much freedom in everything; perhaps it is exactly this excess of freedom that has been the main cause of my blunders." To Count Serge, he merely announced in a jocular tone that he would be glad "to contribute to the extermination of rebellious mountaineers and various bandits."

Before leaving Tiflis to join his battery at Starogladvskaya, he suddenly cultivated a fancy for billiards. This fancy developed within a few days into something of a dangerous little passion. He challenged the best billiard "marker" of the city to a contest, played a thousand rounds with him, and would probably have lost a large sum of money had it not been for the happy circumstance that he was forced to leave.

II

The fortress of Grozny is a dingy little place, squeezed in between the mountains. It swarms with soldiers of all regiments and with a picturesque, motley throng of Armenians, Tartars and Georgians, selling rugs and horses, offering for barter all sorts of "Oriental pleasures," haggling, shouting and picking pockets. Considerable Russian forces are massed here; in a few days, General Prince Baryatinsky will lead them on an "incursion" into the Chechen mountains. Meanwhile, the officers pass their days and nights in that atmosphere of tiresome expectation and nervous merriment which is familiar to all wars. Tolstoy is constantly in the company of his comrades; he has no privacy. And who can have it here? The officers live, three or four in a room, in dingy barracks and dirty, noisy inns.

"January 18.—Idiotic company. All drink, especially my brother, and that vexes me. . . .

"January 19.—Stupid morning. In the evening, Knorring arrived with Besket [fellow officers] and with several bottles of port. I also got drunk. It happened that a few Tenginsky officers and some harlots were there. Yanovich, intoxicated, began to break my fingers and to tell me that I was behaving like a fool. The wine and pain drove me to fury, and I shouted

at him that he was an idiot. Whereupon, offended and with tears in his voice, he uttered invectives. . . . I said that I would not go on with that kind of talk, and that we would settle it in a different manner.

"January 20.—. . . To-morrow, after my morning prayer, I will tell him once more to apologize, no matter whether there will be witnesses to our conversation or not. If he refuses, he will fight a duel. He is going to fire his shot first; when my turn comes, I will refuse to pull the trigger. In that quarrel, I also behaved badly and ridiculously. Yanovich, after all, is a good boy. . . . May the will of God be accomplished. . . .

"January 21.—I did it, and Yanovich readily apologized. But who would understand what it cost me to speak to him again! . . ."

A disreputable drunken quarrel. So that is the kind of "clean, moral life" that Tolstoy has found in the Caucasus! And whose fault is it, if not his own? He is deeply grieved, hopelessly dissatisfied with himself. "I wish we might go into battle as soon as possible!"

III

After a heated battle lasting two days, the Russian troops occupy an *aul* (mountain village) of the Chechens. The General, who is riding an excellent thoroughbred, is highly pleased with the results of this affair, during which he was himself the whole time under fire. He turns to the officer accompanying him and, pointing towards the soldiers and Cossacks, says, with a kindly smile: "Well, Colonel! Permit them to loot! Don't you see how anxiously they are waiting for it, the poor devils!" The "poor devils" do the work thoroughly: an hour later, the depots of hay are burned, the *moskey* is littered and polluted in the most barbarous manner, as are also the fountains; the *sakli* (houses of the mountaineers) are battered down—a pile of ruins is all that remains. The incursion—for it is by such incursions that the Russian Army fights in the Caucasus—is ended, and the troops return home over wild, unforgettably beautiful paths.

For two days, the men and officers marching beside Tolstoy groaned, suddenly dropped their rifles and fell to the ground in the most unnatural postures; an enemy shell struck the wheel of

the cannon which he was training on a distant group of Nogai riders and burst, and it was only by a miracle that he remained unharmed; and in the *aul*, he had seen how a soldier struck a Chechen woman with the butt of his rifle. . . .

Such are some of Tolstoy's military experiences of these two and a half years, picked out at random.

During this period, he often makes entries like this: "War is so unjust and horrible a thing, that those who participate in it must endeavor to stifle the voice of their conscience by drinking. Is it good that I am involved in such a strife? Lord, teach me what to do, and forgive me if I sin!" Indeed, he is far from being a naïve young officer. It is not only that he understands the "immorality" of the "butcheries" in which he participates and finds delight; not only that the thoughts of the future pacifist and Christian are, in their essence, ripe within him; he fully grasps the strangeness of his own psychology, of human psychology in general. To-morrow, he notes, he may be killed; yet he continues, with a note of astonishment and disgust at the spectacle of himself—he courts Cossack women with particular greed: "I stand for hours before the looking-glass, and suffer because my left mustache is not so thick and hearty as the right one!" But then, he brushes these reflections aside: "It may be strange, yet my childish conception of war, that of gallantry and heroism, is the most convenient for me." He deliberately closes his eyes on other, "inconvenient," thoughts and conceptions.

Tolstoy's reputation in the army is firmly established. "Fellow officers like him for his . . . exceptional courage. . . . Wherever shots are fired, he is immediately there. . . ."—such is the testimony of those who have seen him in action. He dreams of being decorated with St. George's Cross, the highest military decoration awarded for courage. Silly, petty, childish desires? The old, long-since familiar devil of vanity, come now in a new disguise? Very probably. He understands that very well, and is ashamed of these desires; but he cannot suppress them. In fact, he has decided not to return to his home until his shoulders have been adorned with epaulettes and his chest with this coveted small silver trinket.

During these years in the Caucasus, he fully matures. His eyes look out from beneath bushy eyebrows with keen intelli-

gence, sparkling now with a kind, open, heart-penetrating light, now with concentrated flames of anger; his broad cheekbones and tanned skin vibrate with health; his whole lithe, athletic figure, clad in his excellently fitting uniform-jacket (he always dresses with meticulous care) bespeaks exceptional strength. Indeed, one of his favorite amusements during the campaign is this: he lies down on the floor; one of his fellow officers, a man weighing some two hundred pounds, stands on the palms of his hands, and he lifts this living weight several times the full length of his arms. His comrades find his disposition extremely volatile and uneven: he is often kind, meek, full of contagious merriment, and his brutish, severe cheekbones are effaced in broad, irresistible smiles; at other times, however, he frowns without apparent reason, is caustic and icy, and seizes the first pretext to start an argument, during which, without once losing his reserve, he delivers himself of the most bitter and venomous characterizations. He often explodes at the slightest irritation, and it is said of him that "he must be handled like a powder magazine." When he loses his temper, he sometimes beats Alexey, his serf. Such scenes are followed by protracted spasms of terrible remorse. Constant contact with men has cured him, at least to a certain extent, of his self-consciousness, and a significant new trait has appeared in him—all of his comrades testify that he possesses a wonderful talent for telling all kinds of stories, and especially of imitating and impersonating the soldiers, with their amusing local dialects, with their racy humor and with all the peculiarities of their speech. "When Count Tolstoy begins to tell a story, it is impossible not to laugh or not to listen." It is true, however, that even in these companionable moments, he often mentions, as though incidentally, his connection with General Prince Baryatinsky, his relationship with the Gorchakovs, and in various ways makes his comrades understand that "they are not men of his class" (most of them, indeed, are "parvenus"—sons of aristocratic families usually serve in the "privileged regiments," but not in the Caucasian Army).

Since his very first days in the Caucasus, he has been corresponding with Mlle. Yergolsky. His letters to her are now more tender than they have ever been before. "It is only this long parting" that has made him understand "what she means" to him. She is "the dearest being" in his life—a being to whom he is

"infinitely indebted," who is to him almost a mother. "The last time, I wrote you that your letter had made me cry, and I believed that the cause of my tears was my indisposition. Now I realize that I was not right. Since a certain time, all of your letters have the same effect on me. I have always been '*Lyovaryova*.' Formerly, I was ashamed of this weakness, but the tears which I shed while thinking of you and of your love for us are such happy tears that I permit them to roll down my cheeks without false shame . . ." And then he imparts to her his conception and dream of happiness. "A few years hence, neither young nor yet old, I see myself living in Yasnaya. My affairs are in order. I have neither worries nor troubles. You are with me . . . I work in the morning, but most of the day we spend together. We dine. In the evening, I read aloud something that interests you. We talk; I tell you of my life in the Caucasus, you tell me of my father and mother. . . . Remembering persons who were dear to you, you will begin to weep, and I will join in your emotion; but those will be soothing tears. . . . But this is not all. I am married; my wife is a kind, quiet, loving being; she loves you as much as I do; we have children who call you grandmother. . . . Indeed, you replace grandmother, but you are better than she was; I replace father, although I do not deserve this honor. . . . If I were to be made Emperor, if all the riches of Peru were to be given to me; if, in a word, a fairy were to come to me and ask me what is my greatest desire, I, in all honesty, would say that it is this. . . . Again I am weeping. Why? For joy. . . ."

IV

In the intervals between the campaigns, with their incursions and excitements, Tolstoy lives with the battery to which he is attached at Stanitza Starogladovskaya. Perhaps he will stay here a month, perhaps a year—no one knows when the army unit to which this battery belongs will be ordered on a new campaign. He lives, together with Count Nicholas Nicholayevich, in the cabin of an old Cossack, Yepishka, with no comforts whatsoever, in the primitive and brutish condition of Cossack village life. Benches instead of chairs, rough wooden walls, small windows; but this lack is compensated by the fabulously rich Caucasian orchards, by the luxurious vegetation and by the clear, exhilarat-

ing mountain air. Two miles south of Starogladovskaya flows the river Terek, serving as a sort of a natural front-line: the foremost *auls* of the mountaineers are situated immediately beyond it. At night, the river is patrolled by Cossacks: profiting by the darkness, the Chechen *abreks* (warrior bandits) often cross it, steal horses, kill a man or two and abduct a Cossack woman. The stealing of horses is, by the way, regarded as a knightly exploit by these wild Mahomedan cavaliers of the mountains. After sunset, rifle-shots are constantly heard along Terek. Yet Starogladovskaya is regarded by the soldiers as a peaceful zone.

The cabin of the Tolstoy brothers is one of the most hospitable military billets in the *stanitza*. Fellow officers always stop in at noon to see them and to share a drink with them. Between one and two o'clock, they all go to Colonel Alexeyev's for dinner. Tolstoy philosophizes at length with Count Nicholas, plays chess and goes on trips to the mountains.

No sooner did Tolstoy join the army than it became one of his chief ambitions in life "to make for himself a brilliant military career." Colonel Alexeyev, however, predicts that he never will succeed in this design. And he is right: in spite of his name and connections, Tolstoy will advance in the military hierarchy very slowly, and this will constantly vex and offend him; for instance, to his despair, he will remain for two and a half years in the unenviable rank of a non-commissioned officer. The fact is that the everyday routine of military service bores him just as much as its holidays and the fighting excite him. Drills and parades he attends irregularly, as he once attended his lectures, and he is indulged only because the elderly and good-natured Colonel Alexeyev has an almost sanctimonious regard for titles of nobility. Yet even he feels himself constrained to reprove Tolstoy from time to time; once in a while, he even puts the young man under arrest for a day, for some absolutely inexcusable disregard of the obligations of the service.

To Tolstoy, the *stanitza* is a new and truly fascinating little world. The Grebensky Cossacks are, indeed, an exceptionally interesting race. They are the descendants of "old believers" who, in the sixteenth century, fled from the Church reform which was then being carried out by the Czars of Moscow, and settled in the Northern Caucasus, among the hostile and warlike Caucasian tribes. For two hundred years they had lived out of all contact

with their mother country, forming, as it were, a little Russian island in this Oriental sea, constantly fighting and defending their independence. When, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Russian State, in its gradual southward expansion, reached the confines of the Northern Caucasus, it came again into contact with the Cossacks. By this time, the old religious enmity was forgotten; the Cossacks perceived in Russia an ally which would protect them against the mountaineers, and they willingly submitted themselves to the Russian throne. Now they are fighting by the side of the Russians for the conquest of the Caucasus; yet, both in the ranks of the army and in their domestic affairs, they preserve an autonomous organization.

They are tall, strong, well-built and handsome. In spite of their long isolation, they have preserved, in their full integrity, their mother tongue and the "old Christian faith"; but their dress, habits and manner of life are rather those of Caucasians than those of Russian peasants. Like a Chechen, a good Cossack loves freedom and detests work: fighting, hunting and banditry are, in his eyes, the only pursuits worthy of a man—let farming, housekeeping and other "humiliating" occupations be taken care of by the woman. Horses he acquires chiefly by theft; the best rifles, swords and daggers he strips from the bodies of the *abreks* he has killed. Both men and women live like Nature itself: they eat, drink, fight, perpetuate their race, rejoice, suffer and die with that abundance of natural instincts, stemmed by no conventionality, which is conceivable only in "natural beings," only in men conceived as human animals.

One can easily imagine how fascinating all this is for Tolstoy. Snobbish with his equals and especially with those who pretend without "right" to be his equals, he is, at the same time, simplicity itself with common folk, to whom an irresistible curiosity attracts him. Experience and constant contact with soldiers have developed in him a firm, simple, straightforward manner of approaching people—a manner which is devoid of any trace of sentimentality, which appeals and pleases, and which places him easily and naturally upon a footing of equality with those to whom he speaks. Like most of the officers fighting in the Caucasus, he dons the Cossack, that is to say, a Circassian coat. And the Cossacks, who scrupulously avoid the unwelcome guests billeted in their *stanitza*, like him. He makes friends with a

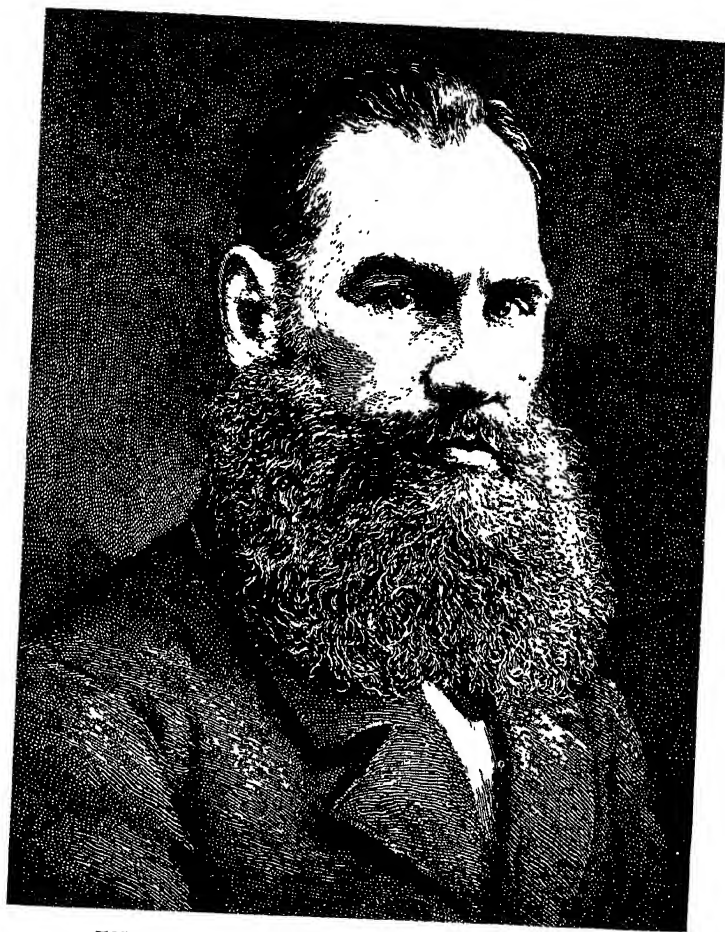
great many of them, drinks *chikhir* (their wine) in their company, and converses with them for hours. It is especially with Yepishka, the owner of the cabin in which he lives, that he becomes intimate. Yepishka is assuredly a specimen of the Cossack race worthy of interest and observation. Enormous, of Herculean build, with a long white beard and a roaring basso, he is a living personification of all that is heroic in the Cossacks. As he puts it himself, with boastful, merry laughter, he was, in his youth, "the greatest *djighit* [warrior rider] and thief in the *stanitza*"; he "stole from the mountaineers [and sometimes from the Russians] entire droves of horses, sold prisoners into slavery and abducted Chechens at the end of a lasso from their very *auls*."

But these are not Tolstoy's only occupations. Let us concentrate on his first year in the Caucasus. Between battles, drinking and hunting, he finds time for work. He reads a great deal. By this time, he is at home in European literatures, and his literary tastes have definitely crystallized. Sterne's "Sentimental Journey," with its mild humor and expressiveness of detail; Stendhal's "Chartreuse de Parme" and "Le rouge et le noir"; the Genevan sentimentalist Töpfer and the "unforgettable" Dickens—such are the authors and the works to which he returns most frequently. His reading is not merely reading, but also analysis, meditation, investigation. He likes it best when the author does not express in a direct form his attitude towards the subject matter, but "conveys it indirectly, and always remains faithful to it." He also understands that there must be "an invisible center" from which, as it were, "the light is shed over the entire work." With his habitual proneness to rationalization, he elicits from every book that he likes the invisible rafter on which it is constructed—the method. Of the contemporary Russian writers, he likes chiefly one who is said to be a rising star—Turgenev. Turgenev's short stories, "A Sportsman's Sketches," have just been published and have been accepted in the capitals as a significant artistic event. These are a collection of excellent peasant portraits, drawn in a humanitarian vein, and perhaps with a certain tincture of idealization.

When he set out for the Caucasus, Tolstoy took with him the first outlines of that work in which he proposed to resuscitate the story of his childhood. He is still working on it. "Do you

remember, *chère tante*," he writes to Mlle. Yergolsky, "the advice you once gave me—to write novels? Well, I have taken it seriously, and am devoting my time to literary pursuits. I do not know whether that which I am writing at the present time will ever appear in print; yet the work amuses me, and I have done too much of it to give it up now." It amuses him, but at times he is deeply dissatisfied with it, too. His mind often goes stale on it, and his style seems to him "heavy" and "inarticulate." "Do I possess any talent, in comparison with our contemporary Russian writers?" he asks himself, one day, and sighs: "No, certainly not!" Nevertheless, he perseveres in this work: the greater his doubts, the more obstinately he works.

He has matured physically; he matures spiritually, too. That strenuous, at times ridiculous, inner-struggle which began within him at Moscow and which does not relent even during the campaigns, is now progressing with redoubled intensity. Among the innumerable contradictions of his character one is, perhaps, most striking. Few people depend upon their environment as much as he does; he still readily succumbs to the influence of those with whom he is spending his time, to such an extent that he begins to imitate their intonations, their voice, their characteristics. "With good ones," he confesses, "I am good, and with bad ones—bad." Yet at the same time, he remains, in his deeper self, remarkably unqualified by any environment. No matter where he is and what is happening to him, he lives with exceptional intensity, with a constant spiritual glow, inhabiting an inner world that is essentially his own and that can hardly be influenced by anything originating from outside himself. Now he labors, within this inner universe, with unprecedented zeal; he strains all his mighty spiritual energies to widen it and set it in order. Does this mean that he is still writing "rules of behavior"? Yes. Moreover, he now also keeps a "Franklin Journal"—that is to say, he marks with a cross, in a special notebook, every case of "gluttony," "sexual sin," "vanity," etc., as he had begun to do in Moscow, after reading a biography of Benjamin Franklin. By this system of spiritual bookkeeping, he still earnestly hopes to prop his shaking "rules" and curb his tempestuous behavior. This will to be "good" reaches in him a keenness so barbarously sincere that soon he will note: "I will shoot myself unless, to-morrow, I do a good deed." And, one morning,



TOLSTOY IN THE LATTER PART OF THE SEVENTIES

with such a decision in mind, he goes out and makes a gift of his horse to the first man he meets in the streets.

He ponders furiously. Of what? Of everything. But chiefly, perhaps, of himself. Who is he? That question preoccupies him more and more. "There is within me something which makes me believe that I was not born to be like others. Why do I have this feeling? Does it come from disharmony, from a lack of cohesion in my capacities, or do I really stand above average men? I am old [he is at that time twenty-three]; the time of growth is ended, or is coming to an end—yet I am still tortured by vague thirsts. . . . Is it by the thirst for glory? No, I do not desire that; I despise it—but I want to exert a great influence upon the life of men, upon their happiness. Is it possible that I shall pass away with this thirst still unsatisfied? There are thoughts which I do not confess even to myself. They are so dear to me that, without them, life would not be worth living. . . ." Yes, who is he? He thrusts the lancet of analysis deeper and deeper into his soul, probing more and more meticulously.

He has seen how people live—all sorts of people—men in palaces, soldiers, peasants; and what is of still more consequence, he has seen how they die. This edifies and enlightens him. Perhaps it is for this reason that his attention concentrates on religion more than ever before. Does he believe? His essentially rationalistic mind cannot trust itself to any authorities; it must discover everything for itself. He tries "to logically deduce the idea of God," and in this he certainly fails. But emotionally, he is an ardent believer; his instincts, when they are not obscured by the inveterate skepticism of his intellect, protest that there is God. On one occasion, shortly after his arrival in the Caucasus, he experiences a moment of genuine mystical revelation.

"I hardly slept at all in the course of the night," he writes, one morning. "After having made my entries in the diary, I began to pray. I cannot express the ecstasy which pervaded me while I was praying. . . . If prayer is a petition or an expression of thankfulness, I was not praying. I panted for something lofty and good; I am unable to tell for what, although then I felt very clearly what it was. I wanted to dissolve into the all-embracing Being. I asked Him to absolve my sins. But no, I did not ask, for I felt that if He had granted such happiness to me, they all were absolved. I asked, and at the same time I felt that I had

nothing to ask for, and that I did not know how to ask. I thanked; yes, but not with words or thoughts. Thankfulness and prayer were all fused into one sentiment. Fear had entirely disappeared. Faith, hope, love—how could I distinguish these sentiments from that one feeling which filled me! But no, now I know what it was—it was the love of God; a lofty love, comprehending all that is good, excluding all that is evil. How terrible it was for me to look back upon the petty, vicious side of my life! I could not understand how it could so grasp and hold me. From the depths of my heart, I implored God to take me into His embrace. I was no longer conscious of my flesh. . . .

“But no, the petty, vicious side pulled me down again. In an hour, I again heard the voices of vanity and vice. I fell asleep, dreaming of glory and of women. . . .

“I thanked Him for that moment of ecstasy which had exhibited to me both my pettiness and my greatness. I want to pray, but I cannot; I want to understand, but I dare not. I confide myself to Thy will!

“Why did I write all this? How flat, stale, even senseless it all is on paper, and how extraordinary were my feelings then!”

Indeed, there is an element in Tolstoy which is constantly smelting and boiling, under enormous pressure, as in a furnace. Delivered of this pressure, Tolstoy would not be Tolstoy.

V

To his bitter disappointment, Tolstoy is not decorated with St. George's Cross, although Colonel Alexeyev believes that he deserves it. When the distribution of decorations comes for the first time, it is the fault of the red tape at the War Ministry: something is found to be wrong with Tolstoy's documents. The second time it is much worse: he oversleeps, misses some of his duties, and is placed under arrest for a day; and, arrested, he hears with despair how, to the sounds of drums and music, the cross which was assigned to him goes to another man. Finally, the third time he nobly cedes his cross to a simple soldier, by withdrawing his candidacy: to a simple soldier it means a great deal. All this is extremely vexing. Tolstoy feels that if he were asked which he would prefer—to see the novel on which he is working in print, or to possess that little silver pendant, he would, to his shame, choose the latter.

Once he accompanies his brother on an excursion to the fort of Stary Yurt. There he strays into a house where several officers are gambling. For some time he watches, frowning and biting his lips. He still has to pay off the card debts which he had contracted in Moscow, and which, amounting to many thousands of roubles, has cut his budget to a rather slim figure. Besides, he has made himself a solemn vow to cure himself of this "bad habit." Finally, however, he stakes a few roubles on a card and loses them, stakes more and loses again and, an hour later, he is the loser by 850 roubles. Repentance. Self-mortification. What vexes him especially is the fact that he cannot any longer deceive himself—his gambling is not a "bad habit," but an all too actual, cruel, blind passion, against which his good resolutions are powerless. Let it be noted that, some time later, he will shut himself up for entire days with a deck of cards in an attempt to work out "the rules of the game" as he works out "the rules of life." His diary will be filled with intricate "formulae, abiding by which I am bound to win." Yet, as soon as he finds himself at the green-cloth table, his eyes will begin to blaze and his hands to tremble; he will forget everything about his sagacious "rules" and, making mistake after mistake, losing more and more, he will be ready to stake his entire fortune on a single draw.

Soon, however, most of his preoccupations and worries are overshadowed by one great agitation. He is again in love, and the heroine of his new romance is a Cossack woman.

Instead of being conquered, Tolstoy's other "bad habit"—that of "falling in love," at least for a day or two, with every good-looking girl he meets—has assumed, under the rays of the Caucasian sun, even more serious proportions than before. Soon after his arrival in Starogladovskaya, he noted: "There are two sources of this passion—the flesh and the imagination. It is easy to struggle against the flesh, but to check the imagination, which glorifies the flesh, is extremely difficult. . . . Nothing can help here except will-power and prayer—God alone can save me from temptation." But the Almighty did not seem to heed the young officer's prayers, while his "imagination" worked admirably. In any case, he was constantly "running after girls," after the Cossack Ulianas and Solomonidas, after the daughters of inn-keepers at Stary Yurt, and others—paying for these exploits, of course, by a proportionate amount of subsequent self-mortification. "It

seems to me that every bare leg of a woman belongs to a beauty. . . . Carnal desire does not give me a moment of respite . . . I have sinned again. . . .”—such sentences recur again and again in his diary.

But this time it is a genuine, serious passion that engages him; not merely a “romance” which begins in the barn and ends in the orchard. We possess but little precise information concerning it. There is no mention of it in Tolstoy’s correspondence of the time. Nor, moreover, strange as this may be, does he record it in his diary; the diary yields only a few indirect references, from which we can deduce, with a fair degree of certainty, that the name of the woman he loves is Oxanna. In his old age he will, however, often remember this love with a singular frown—perhaps of regret, perhaps of repentance—and admit that it left a deep furrow in his soul. He will also tell some of his biographers that it was, in broad outlines, very similar to the romance of Olenin and Marianna, the central figures of one of his early masterpieces, “The Cossacks.”

What we know beyond question is this: He is conquered by her beauty, by “that primitive beauty in which the first woman must have emerged from the hands of the Creator.” He courts her obstinately, for, unlike a great many of her Cossack sisters, she can be had neither for money nor for the gift of silk kerchiefs. She seems to accept his courtship with distasteful astonishment, though perhaps with curiosity, too. In any case, his passion remains unsatiated, and he suffers violently. There are moments when, forgetting all else, he would even be willing to marry her.

This passion draws him still closer to the Cossacks. He now spends more time than ever with Yepishka, and their two figures, with guns on their shoulders (Yepishka’s gun being an obsolete, cannon-like affair which he alone is able to handle) may be seen in the Terek forests almost every day. Against the background of this exuberantly rich and green Caucasian vegetation, the old Cossack, with his Herculean figure, ragged clothes and white beard, seems a human counterpart of a mighty oak or elm, like the Spirit of the Earth incarnate in blood and flesh. While hunting, he walks noiselessly, in spite of his colossal weight, so as not to frighten away a rabbit or a pheasant; and when dry boughs crack under Tolstoy’s feet, he turns back, angrily waves his enormous paw, and whispers: “Hush, you brute,”—or rather,

not "you," since he uses the familiar Russian "thou," no matter to whom he speaks—"you clumsy soldier!"—the word "soldier" taking, on the lips of a free Cossack, almost the weight of an invective. And when they rest in the grass, looking across the swift, cold stream of the Terek and refreshing themselves with bread and wine, he teaches his disciple many valuable lessons. Drinking and hunting are now Yepishka's only passions and occupations; he knows every bird and every beast, is familiar with all their little tricks and secrets, and believes that Tolstoy ought likewise to be instructed in this lore. But sometimes he digresses into other branches of forest wisdom, as well. If, for example, a stick lies across a path, God preserve you from stepping over it, if you do not wish to be caught by a Chechen bullet—remove it with a prayer, and then go ahead in safety. Avoid women, when you go to the woods; if you should meet one, you won't kill anything. When Tolstoy smiles at this, Yepishka is angered and expresses, in full frankness and in very colorful terms, his opinion of his young friend, whom he earnestly believes to be a good fellow, but a terrible idiot.

Yepishka is not merely a highly picturesque and decorative figure, but also a self-made philosopher. In his days of banditry and fighting, he had "released" a large number of human souls from their bodies and acquired first-hand knowledge of a great many Russian prisons. Yet now, in his old age, a strange kindness, like the last warm, but no longer hot rays of the setting sun, touches his rough figure and roaring speeches. He swears and frowns when, instead of killing, his bullet wounds an animal. "Ah, damn it! How long will it now paint the forest with its blood?" In the slow, healthy sunset of his years, he has discovered something of a primitive, pantheistic sympathy with all things living, such as would be the pantheism of a fine, solid rock, if only rocks could think. But, above all, he is a natural Epicurean. "God," he says, "made the world to give joy to man. They speak of sin, the fools! There is no sin! Consider the beast. It does not care where it lives, whether in our swamp or in a Tatar swamp. Wherever it chances to be, there is its home, and it feeds upon whatever God will give it. And that's the right thing to do; for after we die, grass will grow on our graves, and that will be the end of it."

With his unsatisfied passion for the Cossack woman and his

long hours with Yepishka, Tolstoy's mind naturally evolves a new theory, a new philosophic dream. If only he could marry her! Would not that be the wisest thing to do? It is true that Petersburg would be horrified, and he would be abandoned by society. But what does that matter? The Petersburg salons *style Empire*; the pale, polite faces—nay, the masks from which all sincere human expression is carefully eradicated; the artificiality of crinolines hiding sickly, flabby feminine bodies; the amiable deceit of elegant manners camouflaging flimsy vices and dull sins; the eternal lie of that which a little group of conceited fools call culture—is that, after all, so great a thing to lose? And where is there *real* life—there or here? To marry her; to revert to type; to strip oneself of all culture; to become a simple Cossack—to be like Yepishka, a solid human oak, and nothing more—oh, how wonderful and spiritually comfortable that might be! Tolstoy's spirit is complicated—alas, too complicated; perhaps it is for this reason that he yearns for simplicity. And would this Cossack dream not reduce him to complete, ideal simplicity? Moral problems? Intellectual doubts? But such a reversal to type would solve all of them at once, so to speak, by simply punching them in the metaphorical jaw with a heavy, healthy Cossack fist. Tolstoy is strongly attracted by such radical solutions. "There is no sin," says Yepishka, and is he not right? Where there is no thought, there is no sin. Rousseau's great Utopia, the liberation of mankind from all conventionalities . . . had it not fascinated him from his early youth, since those far-off days when he had tried to wear a "philosophic cloak"? And is Cossack life not the best imaginable realization of this Utopia, though in a crude and brutalized form?

For some time Tolstoy walks about, intoxicated with this new dream, with this new philosophic dogma of his turbulent mind. Yet he makes no attempt to carry it into practise. Why? Because the woman does not want him? Or because that cursed society is very dear to him, in spite of everything? Or because he realizes, in the depths of his soul, that this is all merely a sweet dream, and that it is not so easy to strip oneself of the vestment of one's culture?

VI

Tolstoy is tenacious: all this time, he continued at work on his manuscript, and at the end of June 1852—that is to say, a year

after his arrival in the Caucasus—his novel is finished at last. The nearer he came to the end, the more labor and pains it cost him. He re-wrote it four times from beginning to end, not to speak of the innumerable corrections and re-writings of this and that chapter accomplished in the process of the work. Re-writing it for the fourth time, he became so disgusted with it that he jotted down: "At first, it was a pleasure for me to work on my novel; but now I despise my work, myself and those who will read it. If I do not give it up, it is only because . . . I want to acquire the habit of working, and because I should like to please my aunt." He shrinks almost in horror from writing as a career: "*Et puis cette horrible nécessité de traduire par des mots et aligner en pattes de mouches des pensées ardentes, vives, mobiles comme des rayons de soleil teignant les nuages de l'air. En faire le métier? Grand Dieu!*" Yet when it is all finished, he re-reads the manuscript again and, to his astonishment, "bursts into tears" over some of the chapters: "There are really excellent passages, but there are very bad ones, too."

He hesitates for some time; then he decides to take a chance. He sends the novel to *The Contemporary*, the leading liberal monthly in Petersburg. Simultaneously, he writes a letter to Nekrassov, the chief editor, who is at the same time a very prominent poet and an influential critic. In this letter, he explains that "Childhood" (for such is the title of the book) is the first part of a projected work, which will be entitled "Four Epochs of Growth Development." "I am awaiting your verdict with great impatience. It will either encourage me in my favorite pursuit, or prompt me to burn all I have hitherto attempted." The lot is thus cast. But it is cast very cautiously: he signs both the letter and the manuscript, not with his full name, but with the initials "L. N." Moreover, the book was written in the strictest secrecy: the only two persons who knew of it were Count Nicholas and, of course, Mlle. Yergolsky; neither of them would laugh, whatever destiny might be in store for the manuscript. All precautions are thus taken to alleviate the wound which will be inflicted by the almost certain rejection.

In spite of his extraordinary health, Tolstoy often suffers from typically neurasthenic attacks of sullenness and weakness; the athletically built fellow lies disabled for days at a time, has headaches, toothaches, real or imaginary attacks of rheumatism, and

believes he is going to die. Already before finishing his novel, overworked and in the throes of such a neurasthenic crisis, he secures a leave and goes for a cure to Pyatigorsk, a summer resort with mineral springs in the peaceful zone of the Caucasus.

Soon after his return to Starogladvskaya, he receives a letter from Petersburg. It can be easily imagined with what trepidation he unseals the envelope.

"DEAR SIR:.

"I have read your manuscript, entitled 'Childhood.' It is sufficiently interesting to be published, and it will be published. Without knowing the continuation, I cannot say with assurance whether the author has talent, but I am inclined to think he has. In any case, his manner, and the simplicity and truthfulness of the narrative, lend undeniable qualities to his work. If, as ought to be expected, there is more movement and more description in the continuation, the whole will form a good novel. Please send me the ensuing parts. I will be watching with interest both your talent and your work. Meanwhile, I should like to give you a bit of advice. Do not hide behind initials—let your first work appear under your full name, unless you are only a stray guest in literature.

"Respectfully,
"NEKRASSOV."

Accepted! "Sufficiently interesting!" "Will be published" in the very monthly where Turgenev's stories are published! Tolstoy notes: "Am foolishly happy. . . ."

Yet his joy reaches its climax when, some days later, a second letter comes from Nekrassov. "Upon re-reading your novel in proof, and not in the difficult manuscript," he writes this time, "I have found it to be even much better than I had first thought it was. I can now say positively that the author has talent. This, I believe, for you as a beginner, is a very important thing to know."

Talent diagnosticated in all solemnity by no less a person than the omniscient Nekrassov—does not that mean something!

VII

The appearance of "Childhood," in the September issue of *The Contemporary* for 1852, at once attracts the attention of all

literary Russia. The novel is more than a success; it is almost a sensation. "If this is L. N.'s first work, Russian literature must be congratulated upon the birth of a new great writer. . . . We have not for a long time read a work as noble, truthful and full of feeling as 'Childhood.' . . . The highly talented L. N. . . ."—such is the salutation of the critics. Who, however, is the author? Guesses are ventured, probable names mentioned. The modest "L. N.," which was intended to conceal the disgrace of rejection, adds to the success by mystifying.

Meanwhile, Nekrassov receives from L. N. the request to pay for the novel "whatever it may be worth, in your opinion"; and, seeing how the novel has been received, answers: "It is our old tradition not to pay anything to author-débutants for the publication of their first works, whereby the monthly, as it were, introduces them to its readers. For all your subsequent works, however, we shall pay you the highest price we pay for fiction to our best-known contributors, this price being fifty silver roubles for a printed sheet." This means about one kopeck a word, or, to put it in American terms, less than half a cent a word. But the times are patriarchal; besides, the old-fashioned Russian monthlies of the Fifties do not spoil their writers, and, if the practical Nekrassov has offered L. N. such extravagant terms, it means that L. N. has actually become a famous writer over night.

Unlike most, even the most talented, beginners, Tolstoy has stepped into literature, not with a spineless, immature and expressionless first draft of something-to-come-in-the-future, but with an artistically ripe little masterpiece. Trained and tempered in the continuous analysis and criticism of his own behavior, he is already, at this age, an excellent and singularly exacting critic of his own work. Through a year of strenuous re-writings at Starogladvskaya, through this period of meticulous apprenticeship, he gradually eliminated from the original version of "Childhood" all in it that was weak (with the exception of only a few sentences), slowly yet unerringly finding his way to concise perfection. The preliminary work which beginners usually exhibit to the public has, in Tolstoy's case, been kept behind the stage; the reader perceives no trace of it in the finished product.

"Childhood" is not a novel, in the strict sense of the word. The protagonist, who calls himself Nicholas Irtenyev, merely unfolds, narrating in the first person, the panorama of the ten years of

his age. Here is the beginning. He is awakened one morning by Karl Ivanovich, the German governor, who strikes directly over his head at a fly. "He did it so awkwardly that he set swaying the small ikon of my name-saint hanging on the oak headpiece of my bed, and that the dead fly fell straight upon my head. I stuck my nose out of my quilt, stayed the swinging ikon with my hand, shook the fly to the floor and looked at Karl Ivanovich with angry, though sleepy eyes. . . . It is true that I am but a little boy, thought I, but why should he disturb me? Why does he not kill flies over Volodya's bed? . . . No, Volodya is older than I; I am the youngest of all—that is why he torments me. 'All he is thinking about,' whispered I, 'is how to cause me annoyance.' . . . Detestable man! And his dressing-gown, and his cap with the tassel, and everything about him is detestable!"

But a minute later, Karl Ivanovich announces that it is time to get up and, sitting on little Nicholas's bed, begins to tickle the soles of his feet, muttering with a kind laugh—"Nun, nun, Faulenzer!" "Although I was very much afraid of tickling, I neither jumped up nor answered him, but only hid my head the deeper under the pillow, kicked my feet with all my might and did my best not to laugh. 'What a good man he is, and how he loves us! How could I have thought so ill of him?' I was angry with myself and with Karl Ivanovich, and I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. . . . 'Ach, lassen Sie, Karl Ivanovich!' I shouted, with tears in my eyes, and stuck my head out of the pillow. Surprised, he left my feet in peace and, with a disturbed mien, began to ask what was the matter. . . .

"I told him that I was crying because I had had a bad dream; that I dreamed mother had died and was being buried. I merely invented it all, because I did not remember whether I had had any dreams at all; but when Karl Ivanovich, touched by my story, began to console me, I came to believe that I had really had this terrible dream, and so my tears continued to flow, although now from an entirely different cause than before. . . ."

Then other scenes follow—the mother in the dining-room, a hunting party, the departure for Moscow, a children's ball, etc. And, as the panorama is gradually unfolded, we recognize, one after the other, our old acquaintances. Indeed, as we already know, "Childhood" is autobiographical not only in form: all the

heroes of it are living men, or men who have lived, and most of the scenes are scenes that actually happened. Tolstoy has renamed, re-arranged and re-modeled them with complete freedom, in whatever manner his artistic designs required; yet it is impossible not to identify in the portraits the originals from which they were painted. Little Nicholas, the "I" of the narrative, is indeed himself, the red-cheeked "*Lyova-ryova*" whom we remember; Nicholas's brother Vladimir (Volodya) is certainly Count Serge in his teens; Karl Ivanovich is a faithful picture of the good-natured Fyodor Ivanovich Rössel; and then there appears an excellent eighteenth-century grandmother, in whom one cannot fail to recognize the old countess. It is true that the parents of "Childhood" are not Tolstoy's parents. Yet they, too, have been painted from living originals. In them, Tolstoy has portrayed a certain M. and Mme. Islenyev, old friends of his father; their name is already familiar to us: it is with their son that, to Mlle. Yergolsky's distress, Tolstoy had gambled, four years ago, in Moscow. Thus "Childhood" is almost a family chronicle, or rather, a chronicle of two families. It is reality; but it is reality transformed into fiction—life freely transposed into art.

To what does "Childhood" owe its success with Russian readers? To the same qualities which, years later, when it will be translated into all languages, will attract to it readers of every country. It is an unmistakably real childhood, which seems to smile and play in the sun with its pure, bright and soft colors. It is all precise description of things and men, all reality; yet, a poetry of unfading charm inexplicably emanates from this reality, and this poetry is attained without the slightest poetic device, without any tricks of style. Tolstoy's narrative is strictly simple and unornamented; nothing bookish is to be found in it; he uses only the words of everyday life: simple, solid, primitive words. Yet these words express with striking freshness the most subtle moods of the little Nicholas and of the other characters, the lightest psychological nuances, the most complex sentiments in their quick fluidity. Already here, in "Childhood," Tolstoy begins to unfold that peculiarity of his talent which will attain its full development in his later works; in speaking of the state of mind of this or that character, he not so much describes, as implies; he mentions little details which usually accompany this state of mind, which are familiar to us all, but on which we

never reflect; and when these details are offered to us, they immediately evoke multitudes of other associations; the whole state of mind in question arises by itself before one's eyes and we feel that all this is familiar to us, that these emotions have unquestionably been our own. So striking, indeed, is this evocative peculiarity of Tolstoy's talent that one cannot help believing that a man of Homer's times, a Chinaman, or a Hindu would be impressed by it, just as we are. There is yet another significant trait in "Childhood." In spite of its simplicity, Tolstoy's style possesses a strange, almost muscular compulsion, in which there is something youthful, good and life-asserting.

The characters peopling the book are impeccably drawn. It is interesting to note that Tolstoy's manner of drawing them is largely the same as it was in his first (unpublished) attempt, "The Story of a Yesterday." Here, too, he elicits their inner equivalents from gestures, intonations and outward appearances. But "The Story" was wholly undisguised and brilliant, yet formless analysis; in "Childhood," the analysis remains, but it is organically infused into description and into the narrative of events. Is "Childhood" absolutely free from literary influences? No. This Tolstoy himself would admit. There is in its construction, in this loose array of scenes and description, something of Sterne and of Töpfer's "*Bibliothèque de mon oncle*." It may be said that "Childhood" is a "Sentimental Journey" into childhood. Between these books, however, there is but a shade of similarity. At bottom, Tolstoy's first novel is original and unimitative.

Among the readers of *The Contemporary*, there is one whom L. N.'s work arouses to enthusiasm. It is Turgenev. He now lives at Spasskoye, his country estate, to which he has been exiled for an absolutely innocent article. Both the censors and the police authorities of the Emperor Nicholas I's régime are rather hard to deal with: they have long since been disquieted by "A Sportsman's Sketches," whose mild liberalism and humanitarianism has struck them as "dangerous," and they have picked up the first plausible, or even unplausible, pretext to signify their disapprobation of Turgenev. It is here, in Spasskoye, that Turgenev reads "Childhood" and, delighted, expresses his feelings unreservedly in a letter to Nekrassov: ". . . Yes, this is a reliable talent. Write to him and encourage him to write. Tell him, if that can be of

interest to him, that I send him my congratulations; that I bow to him and applaud him."

Spasskoye is situated within a few miles from Pokrovskoye, the estate of the Countess Marie and Count Valerian Tolstoy, Tolstoy's sister and brother-in-law (the latter that same distant relative who once almost lured the impressionable Leo to Siberia). Turgenev is on very friendly terms with the Countess Marie—he often reads her his stories before they go to press, accepts her criticism most amiably, and brings her all the interesting novelties of French literature. Now, too, in his enthusiasm over "Childhood," he drives over to her. One can imagine with what astonishment she reads it: who could describe the life of herself, her brothers, the Islenyevs—the whole life of her family—with such accuracy? Turgenev tells her that the author lives in the Caucasus (he knows that from Nekrassov), and that information supplies her with a ready answer. Surely it was written by Count Nicholas Nicholayevich, who always has had such a marked tendency for literature that every one predicted that he would be a writer.

Countess Marie often sees Mlle. Yergolsky; but Mlle. Yergolsky has kept her dear Léon's secret well.

CHAPTER V

THE SWORD OR THE PEN? (*continued*)

I

Soon after the publication of "Childhood," L. N.'s identity becomes known in Petersburg. The fact that, after having won such literary success, he shows no intention of returning from the exotic South, astonishes the literati of the capital.

A few months later, *The Contemporary* brings out a new piece by Tolstoy, a short story entitled "An IncurSION." It is a description of a raid against the mountaineers, during which an *aul* is destroyed and a General permits his men to plunder. The story impresses by its striking originality and by its bold psychological realism—this is an epoch when, both in Russia and Europe, the romanticist "heroization" prevails in the description of war—and it is universally praised.

Yet, after the publication of this story, Tolstoy's initials disappear from the press for a year and a half. He apparently does not even think of capitalizing his first successes.

It is only in October 1854 that *The Contemporary* again comes out with his work. This time, it is "Adolescence," the long-expected continuation of "Childhood." Few, however, notice and read it: it has appeared at a moment when public attention is anxiously preoccupied with more serious concerns than literature. For the first time since the days of Napoleon, Russian territory has been invaded.

On September 14th of this year, the allied Turko-Franco-British forces have landed in the Crimea to besiege Sebastopol, Russia's key fortress on the Black Sea. This comes as a bewildering shock. It is true that Russia has been at war with Turkey for about a year; yet in Petersburg, no one has seemed to believe that Napoleon III and "that cursed English woman" would transform this not exceptional quarrel between two neighbors into an international campaign against Russia. All realize the serious-

ness of the situation—Sebastopol, it is said, is inadequately fortified, and Russia, it is whispered, is, as usual, unprepared. Yet the outburst of patriotic feeling is general and genuine: something has moved in the enormous, spineless Empire; some spark has flashed through it and, for a time at least, fused the millions of its people into a loyal nation.

In the great, empty house of Yassnaya, the aging Mlle. Yergolsky has little news from her Léon. At the beginning of 1854, Tolstoy, at last a commissioned artillery ensign, had stopped in on his way from the Caucasus, kissed her and galloped away to the Danubian provinces, at that time the main theater of war. Then she receives a letter, in which he informs her that he has taken part in the siege of Silistria, a Turkish fortress. He also describes with enthusiasm the heroism of the Russian commander-in-chief, General Prince Gorchakov, a distant relative of his and of the Gorchakovs whom he had known in Moscow. "Yes, Auntie dear," he concludes, "I wish the prophecy you made for me would come true. My greatest ambition at the present time is to become the *aide-de-camp* of a man like Gorchakov, whom I respect and love with all my soul." But where her Léon is now, Mlle. Yergolsky does not know.

But, at the very end of 1854, news from Tolstoy comes to Count Serge Nicholayevich:

"DEAR SERGE:

"During this year I have seen, experienced, felt and lived through such an infinite variety of things that I do not know where to begin. I wrote to our aunt about Silistria, but Silistria is now an old story; the only thing that counts is Sebastopol; and in Sebastopol, I arrived four days ago. . . ."

Thus far, he has received no definite assignment, but he hopes to receive one soon, in or near Sebastopol. And he says no more about himself: the rest of the letter is all about Sebastopol—the fate of the besieged city is apparently the only thing that interests him. Facts, descriptions, data interlined with the anxious question—"Shall we be able to hold it, or shall we not?"—and finally the following résumé:

"The morale of our troops is beyond description. Even in ancient Greece there was no such heroism. . . . While inspecting the troops, Admiral Kornilov used to say to them, instead of

the ordinary greeting: 'Let us die, boys!' And thousands of voices answered enthusiastically: 'Hurrah! Let us die, Excellency!' Nor was this a phrase; looking at them, one could see that they meant it, and 22,000 of them have already kept that promise. A dying soldier told me how they charged the 24th French battery and failed to take it because no re-enforcements arrived in time; while telling me this, he cried like a child. A company of sailors almost mutinied when it was decided to relieve them from a battery on which they had passed thirty days under continuous fire. Women carry water to the bastions, and a great many of them have been killed and wounded; priests, cross in hand, say prayers on the bastions, regardless of the shells. . . . What a wonderful time is ours! I thank the Almighty, who has given me the happiness of seeing these men, of living in these glorious days!"

Yes, Tolstoy is apparently radiant with patriotism; of his literary pursuits, he says nothing. At the end of the letter, however, there is a phrase which clashes amusingly with the martial paragraphs preceding:

"... The only thing that grieves me is this: it is the fourth year that I have been living without the society of women [of decent women, he apparently means]; this, I am afraid, may so brutalize me that I shall be spoiled for family life, and you know how I look forward to that life."

Two months later, Count Serge Nicholayevich again receives a short letter from his brother, in which the latter requests him to sell the house at Yasnaya Polyana: he has lost, at a gaming table somewhere near Sebastopol, a sum of money which he will be unable to pay unless the ancestral mansion is disposed of.

Then, again, long months follow with no news from Tolstoy.

II

"April 25, 1855. Still in Bastion No. 4, which I begin to like better . . . The continuous fascination of danger, the interest with which I observe the soldiers with whom I am living, the sailors, and the war in general—all this is so pleasant that I should not like to be transferred to any other place, all the more because I want to be here when they storm us, if they ever do . . ."

These words are jotted down in a damp, underground, oval space, crowded with soldiers who change their clothes, smoke,

laugh and talk in subdued voices, beside a candle shedding reddish light from a niche. Tolstoy sits on his folding bed with his notebook in his lap, his swaying shadow projected across the bodies of men resting on the earth floor to the opposite wall speckled with drops of moisture.

At times, the continuous confusion of muffled sounds reaching the dug-out from above is shattered by the bewildering thunder of a bursting shell, which is usually followed by the faint echo of the command "Stretchers!" Subdued conversations stop for a moment; then some of the men jest: "Old Lady Loud!" Or "Somebody else has got a leave of absence!" etc.; others sigh and cross themselves, without a change in the quiet, resigned expression of their sunburned faces; still others, in the opposite end of the dug-out, resume the game of "Noses," a card-game in which the winner gets the privilege of striking the loser on the nose with the deck of cards, amid the laughter of the on-lookers. It is in such surroundings that, during all these nights, Tolstoy makes his entries.

Fate has tossed him to Bastion No. 4, which is one of the most exposed fortifications of Sebastopol, at one of the hottest moments of the siege. Four months ago, after his arrival in Sebastopol, he was appointed to a battery stationed on the Belbek River, some fifteen miles in the rear of the besieged city. He was driven to despair by inactivity and boredom, and implored God and his superiors to transfer him to some other place. It was there, by the way, that he most idiotically gambled away his Yasnaya Polyana house, a reminiscence which still makes him grind his teeth. At last, fifteen days ago, his prayers were heard: on April 8, the Franco-British artillery began, along the whole line of siege, a terrific bombardment intended to efface the fortifications of Sebastopol in readiness for the storming; and a day or two later, his battery was sent post-haste to Bastion No. 4.

"I also wish," Tolstoy notes, "that I could fall in love with that nurse whom I have noticed at the field hospital . . ."

Does not his mind check up this "sinful thought" as soon as it is put on paper? Probably, yes. Why, then, is this confession not followed by a few lines of self-stigmatization? In these days, as usually in the days when he lives too close to death, he loves himself and his men, and even the enemy sending shells against him, with that solemn, extraordinary love of which he is incapable in

normal conditions; and he becomes filled with Christian tolerance even toward his own sins.

"I feel admirable . . ."

Is this a pose, an unconscious attempt to deceive himself? By no means. Even in his old age, Tolstoy will remember these as "the merriest days" of his life; he will look back at them, in spite of his disgust of war, with a senile smile of envy. Indeed, he is in that high-strung condition of mind when all his faculties are abnormally sharpened, when one feels and controls one's entire being as thoroughly and joyfully as a good rider feels and controls a good steed. It is true that his first days here were by no means so happy. In the preceding four years of his military experience he had never seen anything like that, and it took time and effort to reconcile himself to the thought that these were his last days, perhaps his last hours. At moments, anguish and despair seethed in him. "To think that they should regard me as merely *chair à canon*!"—he noted at one such moment. Yet, did he not give proof of his courage even in those days? Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to master fear, his by this time rich experience has taught him. But now he has conquered even this secret anguish, has recovered even his inner-balance. Yes, he "feels admirable."

Two manuscripts lie beside him on his folding bed. "Have written a great deal. Have finished 'Sebastopol at Night and in the Day,' and have added some pages to 'Youth' . . ."

Does that mean that, before opening his diary, he was doing creative writing? Certainly. The day he spends in unrelaxing activity at the cannon, moving among the men in heavy, hob-nailed boots, leaning eagerly over the embrasure to see where the shells land, stepping over bodies, over wrecked cannon-wheels. As soon as he is off duty, he transmutes this life into fiction. Where does Tolstoy, on this deadly hill, find the aloofness without which no work of art can be created?

Moreover, his present work requires especial concentration and effort. We see that to-night he has completed the first "Sebastopol Story"—"Sebastopol at Night and in the Day." The idea of writing it was suggested to him by Nekrassov. On the very eve of his appointment to the Bastion, he had received from the famous editor a letter with the request to describe the siege for *The Contemporary*, and this had fired him with enthusiasm.

The fact is that, while still in the Caucasus, he had become greatly interested in war as a literary subject. He was alike dissatisfied with the artificial romantic and the bombastic pseudo-classical descriptions of it which he had encountered in literature. He had to work out a method of his own for his war-canvases. He found a hint of what he wanted in Stendhal: he liked this ruthless disclosure of man's psychological machinery composed of such wheels as vanity, fear, envy, love, shame, behind such words as "heroism," "patriotism," "courage," etc. He began to experiment, to push Stendhal's method further and further, to elaborate, building from it a manner of his own. The first result of this experimentation was "An Incursion." Then he sketched some other Caucasian tales which, as yet unpublished, still lie in his trunk. Thus, Nekrassov's request came at an opportune time, challenging him to a task which he had long contemplated; and he went to work immediately. To-night—that is to say, after less than two weeks of writing—the first "Sebastopol Story" is completed. Thus, standing amid bullets and shells, he labors with complete artistic detachment to describe the feelings of imaginary heroes standing amid bullets and shells!

For four years, Tolstoy has been building up his inner world, his personality, by the sweat of his brow—for personality is never given, but is always built up. Creative work—both on himself and on his imaginary characters (for what is the difference, after all?)—has become his constant practise, the daily bread of his spirit; he can do it—nay, he cannot help doing it—in Bastion No. 4, as he could not help doing it during the campaigns in the Caucasus, or during the long journeys over the dirt roads of Moldavia. Indeed, war and cannon shatter weaker frames; but they polish Tolstoy, giving the finishing touches to his whimsical self-education.

All the men in Bastion No. 4 like Tolstoy. The soldiers are very fond of him—"our merry count," they call him among themselves. He is equally popular with his fellow-officers. Many years later, an artillery colonel, an old, unsophisticated, simple-minded fighter, will thus remember him:

"With the stories he told and songs he improvised, the count cheered all of us in the most difficult moments of the war. Yes, he was truly the soul of the battery. Tolstoy is with us, and we

do not notice how time flies by, and there is no end to the general merriment. He goes to Sympheropol for a few days, and we lose all our spirits. Then, at last, he returns—a real prodigal son: pale, hollow eyed, dissatisfied with himself. He takes me aside, so as not to be heard by the others, and begins to confess. He confesses everything: how he caroused and gambled, and where he spent his days and nights—and mind you, while so doing, he suffers and repents like an actual criminal. It is pitiful to behold him, he tortures himself so. That is the kind of a man he was. In a word, a strange and, indeed, incomprehensible man. But what a comrade and what an honest soul! To forget him is impossible.”

“An honest soul”; perhaps the characterization is better than the old colonel thought. Few, however, are they whom Tolstoy takes into his confidence. To the rest of his fellow-officers, only the other side of his self is shown. They see a brave young boon companion, and nothing more. As if ashamed of his mental superiority, Tolstoy tells very few of his literary accomplishments and successes or of his thoughts; many of his comrades do not even suspect that he writes, and he has become intelligent enough not to show his intelligence, tactful enough not to rise above the army level. “Simple,” “unassuming”—such are the epithets applied to him by his comrades. “Simple?” Yes, for now there is in him not even a shade of that aggressive snobbishness which had distinguished him during his first years in the Caucasus.

III

Meanwhile, important changes have taken place in Petersburg. On March 2, 1855, the Emperor Nicholas I having died, morally crushed and driven to despair by the unsatisfactory progress of the war, the Emperor Alexander II ascended the throne.

Sadness and anxiety reign in the capital. In well-informed circles, it is no longer a secret that, although Sebastopol has held out for six months and probably will hold out for some months more, the heroism of its defenders cannot save it. With no railroads connecting the Crimea with the central part of the Empire, it is impossible to win. Drowning in mud, freezing in snow, perishing of typhus, thousands of recruits are marching from Moscow to the distant South; thousands of springless carts drawn by emaciated farm-horses are carrying, in the same direc-

tion, shells, boots, coats, war materials. Yet, no matter how the enormous country strains and drains its forces, no matter how the skeletons of horses pile up on both sides of endless dirt roads, supplies and re-enforcements for the Allies arrive more quickly by sea. It is whispered that the enlightened, humane young Emperor is fully aware of the uselessness of the bloodshed, and that he has instructed his diplomats to make all concessions compatible with Russia's national dignity to stop it. Yet things have gone too far; France and England cannot be satisfied with what is offered.

The Emperor Alexander II is an old reader of L. N. He is said to have shed tears over "Childhood" and "Adolescence," and to have been deeply impressed by "An Incursion." Learning that Count Tolstoy is fighting in Sebastopol, he orders that "the life of that young man must be spared." The monarch's words are immediately transmitted to the besieged city. On May 27, after a month and a half in Bastion No. 4, Tolstoy receives, to his great astonishment, an order to leave Sebastopol and to proceed to a camp in the rear, back at Belbek, there to assume command of a light mountain battery.

CHAPTER VI

"ON THE THRESHOLD"—OF HATRED AND LOVE

I

On a February day in 1856, a dinner is given on the premises of *The Contemporary* by its co-owners, Nekrassov and Panayev. All the liberal and literary *crème des crèmes* of Russia are present: one sees, among the guests, the enormous, stately figure and beautiful head of Turgenev, the playwright Ostrovsky, the illustrious novelist Grigorovich, and others of equal distinction. M. Panayev's wife, with her perfect *belle-femme* figure and her exquisitely beautiful face, permanently reflecting in a self-satisfied smile the admiration offered her by all, presides over the dinner. She is the only lady present, the undisputed queen reigning over this masculine republic of talent, wit and brilliance—a veritable Russian Mme. Récamier.

Her irresistible eyes—nay, the eyes of the whole assemblage—turn time and again to the guest of honor—Sub-lieutenant Count Tolstoy. The whole gathering, as planned by Turgenev, symbolizes the admission of the young author-soldier, who had returned from the Crimea only two months before, to the Russian Parnassus. But Sub-lieutenant Count Tolstoy, dressed in an immaculate uniform jacket, is as formal as a stiffly starched collar, as official as a diplomatic note. His piercing, expressive eyes are steely; his responses are monosyllabic and to the point, although faultlessly polite. This unexpected change in his demeanor astonishes all who know him. In the first days after his arrival, he was open-heartedness itself. After this unsuccessful war, as after all unsuccessful wars in general, new winds are blowing in Russia—the ice of reaction has melted; the "political spring" is in the air, and every one is talking of forthcoming great reforms and criticizing the Government in the most acrid terms. No sooner, however, does one of the guests venture some remark in this vein than Tolstoy's face assumes an exquisitely sour and bored expression. "Oh, yes!" he says, very casually, "it is considered

fashionable nowadays to discuss the Government in bilious and venomous tones!" At such sallies every one is slightly taken aback. But at this moment, Turgenev, who has been scribbling something in his note-book, waves his hand, in a mock-heroic manner inviting all to silence, and begins to recite, in his high falsetto voice which harmonizes so badly with his enormous stature, the nonsense verses which he has just improvised. His recitation is greeted with general laughter and delight. His verses are a series of brilliant, inoffensively witty verbal caricatures of some of those present . . . Among these animated conversations, the dinner progresses smoothly towards the end when, by chance, some one mentions, in enthusiastic terms, George Sand's latest novel—the famous authoress then being very much in vogue in liberal Russian circles. This again causes Tolstoy to speak, and again all eyes turn to him. In a cold, indifferent tone, he protests: The novels of that female, who attempts to justify the wanton indecency of her own conduct behind her sonorous words on the emancipation of women? How can people with taste admire her dull, inept rhetorical flourishes? It is incomprehensible! Do they not see that all of her characters are hopelessly dead? "Besides"—this is said with emphasis—"if there really were women like those she describes, they ought to be tied to the chariots of turpitude and dragged through the streets of the city!" There is general embarrassment at his words; Turgenev coughs; Nekrassov's pale, emaciated face flushes, and his hand nervously tugs at his drooping mustaches and his thin, long beard; Panayev gazes with concentration into his plate. It is a secret from nobody that Mme. Panayev practises all that George Sand preaches; that she is the wife not only of Panayev, but also of Nekrassov, and that these two gentlemen are often referred to not only as co-publishers, but also as co-husbands. Tolstoy's rudeness is the more astonishing, since many of the guests are aware that he has been warned upon this point. The situation is saved, however, by Mme. Panayev herself. The Russian Mme. Récamier remains unperturbed, and her face continues to reflect its usual self-satisfaction—it has hardly occurred to her that Tolstoy's words could possibly have any application to herself.

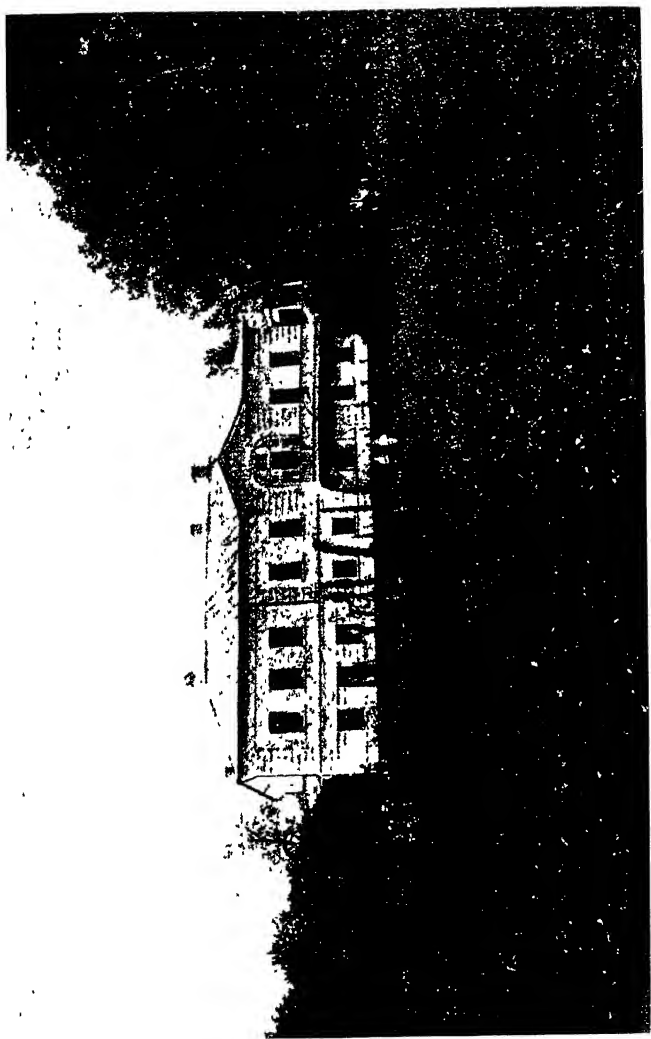
At home, Tolstoy repents. Why did he say all these things? To vex his new confrères, the literati, and, especially, Turgenev?

No doubt. How absurd! And what strange forms, generally speaking, his relations with these men have assumed in the whirlwind of these two months!

While fighting in the Crimea, Tolstoy could not even remotely surmise what a great triumph his earlier works—especially, his “Sebastopol Stories,” two of which had already appeared in *The Contemporary*—had won him in Petersburg. Two months after the storming of Sebastopol by the Allies and its fall (on the day when Tolstoy had galloped from his Belbek camp to the city and had taken part as a volunteer in this last act of the tragedy), he was dispatched to Petersburg with some official reports. When he started off, he was not quite determined whether he would remain in the capital or return to the army. But his homecoming was such an unexpected and unforgettable triumph that there was no room for hesitation—he would resign from the military service and remain.

It was indeed flattering to receive, on the way to Petersburg, a letter from Turgenev, in which the foremost novelist of Russia bade him to sojourn beneath no other roof than that of his, Turgenev’s, Petersburg apartment, and to regard it as his own. It was a delight for him, who, at heart, still regarded himself as an everlasting beginner, almost as a “failure,” to receive the visits of Nekrassov, Panayev, Grigorovich and other men known to all Russia, and to feel that he was in their eyes not only their full-fledged confrère, but also the man of the hour and the most promising young writer in Russia. He felt, too, what an engaging impression he made on everybody. Indeed, even the cold Nekrassov wrote to a friend: “Tolstoy—what a charming man, and what a mind! I am proud to say that, stopping at Turgenev’s, he immediately declared that he wanted to see me. And how we talked on that day! A dear, energetic, noble young man—a hawk, perhaps even an eagle. He is even better than his writings, and you know how good they are. . . . His face, although not handsome, is very pleasing—there is such energy and, at the same time, such softness and kindness in it. When he glances at one, it seems that he caresses. I have become very fond of him . . .”

Moreover, it was not only the literary world that so welcomed him. Since his very first days in Petersburg, he had been one of the most prominent and sought-after figures in aristocratic



TOLSTOY'S HOUSE AT YASSNAYA POLYANA. A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1873

salons. Prince Vyazemsky, the Minister of Education, invited him to his *soirée*; his presence was requested at an amateur performance which was to be given at the Court; hundreds of old and new friends assailed him with invitations. Indeed, Tolstoy found it far more attractive to be a General of letters than a Sub-lieutenant of artillery. Was it not natural, in the midst of these ovations, for him definitely to relinquish the sword to which he had clung for four and a half long years? Tolstoy ceased to be a soldier, as unexpectedly and as impulsively as he had become a soldier.

But why was it that this happy intoxication did not last more than a week? Why did there come a day when the word "we," employed by one of his new literary friends to juxtapose them, the writers, to the rest of the world, shocked Tolstoy for the first time, instead of giving him pleasure?

Perhaps one of the salient traits of Tolstoy's character is his innate and lordly contempt of all generally accepted ideas and concepts; and the tendency, founded on vanity, to be original in everything. Perhaps it is this trait that impelled him, at eight, to shave half his head. It is true that in his war years it manifested itself but little. But in the future years of his life it will play a colossal rôle. And it is now, in Petersburg, that, for the first time, it makes itself felt with especial strength.

After the first weeks were over, he felt, at first perhaps only instinctively, that he and his literary friends were poles asunder. They were enthusiastic worshipers of "progress," "democracy," "European culture." He hardly believed in the actuality of any progress at all, and he questioned the value of all culture. The politics of the day, which absorbed them, left him absolutely cold: he always lived, and will live, outside of all epochs, in a world of his own. This lack of "social sensibility" shocked them. They even mistook it for the mortal sin of "reactionism." Nekrassov, while still very fond of him, wrote: "God alone knows with what putrid and backward ideas his head is filled . . ." Tolstoy constantly, although often clumsily, peers with his piercing eyes into the eternal problems of life, of death, of "abstract morals"; to them all questions were conveniently solved by the word "progress"; among themselves, they began to be ironical in speaking of him: "When will he give over his digging up of moralistic nonsense and become a grown man?" Perceiving this, he was vexed. Moreover, he was an officer and fighter; they—"feeble intellec-

tuals"; he—an aristocrat; many of them were plebeians, and he could not feel at ease in their Bohemian milieu. They detected overtones of superiority in his voice. Cutting epigrams were passed on his "snobbishness."

He could easily have succeeded in reconciling these discrepancies by the use of a modicum of tact and tolerance. This would have been all the more easy since, in spite of his "crankiness," his personality continued to attract all who came within its aura. But his vanity was piqued. A violent, irritated desire to shock and vex them was rising within him. They said "white"; he would say "black." He was not sufficiently Bohemian? Very well! He would assume his most snobbish airs. They found him not sufficiently liberal? He would knock them off their feet by the most medieval and seigniorial aspect of mind that he could assume. How dared they!

At first he was ashamed of this mood of his, and tried to struggle against it; but conquer himself he could not. He began to "cut them with words." To exasperate Panayev, he would demonstrate in an indifferent tone and with striking paradoxical brilliancy that Shakespeare was "just an average writer." He developed a way of fixing his interlocutor with a glance so piercing and impertinently polite, during a discussion, that the latter felt himself dissected and betrayed in every little falsehood and hypocrisy.

II

Soon after the dinner at *The Contemporary*, the first portentous bomb-shell explodes. A few persons, including Tolstoy, gather at Nekrassov's, around the gaming table. The poet-publisher is an excellent gambler. His cold, calculating intellect and self-control enable him to win almost invariably, and, some years before, he had frequently restored the tottering finances of *The Contemporary* by gambling. While Nekrassov is dealing, a letter is brought to him from one Longinov, and he requests Tolstoy to unseal it and read it aloud. Tolstoy reads. The letter concerns various literary matters, for Longinov, a wealthy landlord and a lazy Epicurean, takes an active interest in the affairs of *The Contemporary*. Several names are mentioned, and among them, that of Tolstoy; then there follow some sardonic remarks about the latter's "fear of liberalism." Tolstoy reads it all without pausing or exhibiting any emotion. But as soon as he is at

home, he writes a challenge to Longinov and sends it off without a moment's hesitation. "God alone knows what will come of it, but I will be firm and determined." Meanwhile, he simmers with indignation, and waits for Longinov's seconds to present themselves.

Next morning, however, instead of the seconds, Tolstoy is confronted by Nekrassov's grieved and troubled countenance.

"Leo Nicholayevich, if you do not withdraw your challenge to Longinov, you will have to fight a duel with me also! All this is my fault, and I must bear the responsibility for it!"

He endeavors to prove to Tolstoy that even the most exacting attitude in matters of honor cannot justify a duel on the basis of such a trivial misunderstanding. And it can be hardly doubted that, if all this had happened in the milieu of army officers, or among men of society, Tolstoy would himself have dismissed it with a laugh. But before Nekrassov and the other literati in whose presence it had happened—no! He remains adamant. He *wants* to fight a duel, and that is all! Nekrassov leaves in despair.

However, the difficulty is solved by Longinov himself. Either out of his good-natured laziness or for some other reason, he merely makes no answer at all to Tolstoy's challenge. This attitude proves to be the wisest: a few days later, Tolstoy's wrath cools and he forgets the whole episode. Yet, an angry after-taste remains. For the next few months, he will frown whenever Longinov's name is mentioned in his presence.

III

Meanwhile, it is with Turgenev that Tolstoy's relations become the most strained; and this, in a way, is the most incomprehensible perversity of all.

Ivan Sergeyevich, like Tolstoy, is the offspring of an aristocratic family and a landlord. Although he spends most of his time among the literary intellectuals and shares their liberal and democratic ideas, there is nothing Bohemian about his enormous, well-groomed and impeccably dressed person, nor anything in his gentlemanly deportment that might irritate even so exacting a snob as Tolstoy. Also, the fact that he is a friend of the Countess Marie Nicholayevna had predisposed Tolstoy in his favor even before they had met. What is especially important is that during the days that followed Tolstoy's arrival, Ivan Sergeyevich had dis-

played such tenderness for the young man as no one could have expected of him—for, as a rule, he is a man who prefers to be admired rather than to admire, and to be worshiped rather than to worship. As soon as Tolstoy entered his apartment and they embraced, the elder man had been conquered. He wrote to a correspondent: "Let Fate grant him a long life, and he will achieve wonders!" And to another: "It is already more than two weeks that Tolstoy has been staying with me. . . . You can have no idea what a lovable and remarkable man he is, although, for his wild passionateness and bull-like obstinacy, I have nicknamed him 'the Troglodyte.' I have developed a strange, almost paternal affection for him. . . ."

Without the slightest trace of jealousy, he exclaimed over Tolstoy's talent, proclaimed him to be "the greatest rising author of Russia," and introduced him to all his friends. As he himself put it, he desired to be "the midwife of Tolstoy's birth into literary Petersburg," and there was something touchingly sincere and disinterested in the trouble which he took in discharging these self-imposed duties. Turgenev is Tolstoy's senior by ten years, for he is now thirty-seven. Now, after the publication of "A Sportsman's Sketches" and his first novelettes, he is unquestionably the most celebrated and popular of living Russian writers, and his apartment is the Mecca of cultured Russia. A first-rate artist, a man of rare cosmopolitan erudition and of supreme mental refinement—whose enthusiastic compliments could flatter one more than his, whose attention and affection seduce one's vanity more easily?

And at first Tolstoy, so sensitive of sincere sympathy, was charmed. He literally did not separate himself for a moment from the illustrious novelist. Why did this change now come over him? Did he detect in Turgenev, in spite of the latter's compliments, a grain of the condescending superiority of a senior towards a junior, of a master towards an apprentice? Turgenev often chilled his younger colleagues by such an attitude. We do not know. Tolstoy's entries for the first months of his life in Petersburg are so scant that they suggest no answer.

What we do know from eye-witnesses is that, already during his second or third week in Petersburg, Tolstoy began to tease and anger Turgenev more cruelly and systematically than any other of his new friends. He behaved with the annoying im-

pertinence of a quarrelsome schoolboy, with the prickliness of a porcupine. He would pick up literally every trifling and silly pretext to start an argument with his obliging host, and would sustain his own views in a tone calculated to hurt him as grievously as possible. No sooner would Turgenev give expression—even indirect, undeliberate expression—to his “Western” ideas (he is a staunch advocate of the “Westernization” of Russia) than Tolstoy would shrug his shoulders and remark, in a casual tone, that that putrid, rotten Western Europe was a living personification of hypocrisy, bourgeois self-satisfaction and senile impotence, from which Russia certainly had nothing to learn. No sooner would Turgenev announce that Panayev, the critic Druzhinin and some others were coming in for a chat than Tolstoy would fix him with his piercing eyes and ejaculate, with a yawn of ironical boredom: “Again a lit-t-terary gathering!” No sooner, as Turgenev himself put it later, would he say “that the soup is good” than Tolstoy would assert most emphatically that it was terrible. This was the reward that the enthusiastic “midwife” got for his disinterested efforts! At first, Turgenev wondered, suffered and controlled himself. Offense and bitterness accumulated in him, yet he apparently still hoped that this was but a passing mood of “the Troglodyte.” Finally, however, there comes a day when Turgenev loses his temper, and then the first clash takes place. This is how Foeth-Shenshin, a poet and an eye-witness, describes the scene—

This is another gathering at Nekrassov’s. Foeth-Shenshin arrives later than the others. The clamor of unusually loud voices reaches him already as he rings the doorbell. And when he enters, he witnesses the following scene:

TURGENEV [*whose figure preserves no trace of its usual dignity, with red face and swollen veins on his forehead, shouting at the top of his falsetto voice to* TOLSTOY]: Yes, but such are our convictions!

TOLSTOY [*with outward composure, but with burning eyes and a studied note of contempt in his voice*]: Oh, convictions, if you please! No, sir, I cannot regard those as your convictions. Here I stand, in the doorway, with a dagger or a sword, and say: “As long as I am alive, no one will leave this room.” Well, that is conviction. As to you [*with a cold glance around*], you are doing

your best to hide from one another the motives of your actions, and you call that "conviction"!

TURGENEV [*completely losing his temper and jumping up from his chair*]: Why do you remain in our company, then?

TOLSTOY [*still outwardly composed, but paling and frowning menacingly*]: Permit me to choose for myself the company I wish to remain in!

At this moment, Turgenev rushes, exclaiming inarticulately, into the next room and nervously paces up and down. Meanwhile, "the greatest rising author of Russia," still breathing heavily, curls up on a sofa. A lady, as embarrassed as the rest of the company, comes up to him. "Tolstoy, dear, don't be so angry with him! Please control yourself!" Whereupon, Tolstoy, spitting out his words, replies: "I won't permit him to speak in that way! It is only to irritate me that he walks there, swinging his democratic calves." Turgenev, recovering his self-control in the next room, complains to Panayev: "What can I do? You may boil a Russian officer in soda for three days, yet his arrogant superiority will always remain in him! . . . Oh, how can I help it?"

What has occasioned this distasteful scene? We do not know. Probably it was once more some trifle which was seized upon by Tolstoy and flourished as a red rag before Turgenev's nose. In any case, Tolstoy notes: "Have broken with Turgenev—apparently forever."

But no; nothing of the kind! Turgenev, generally speaking, can seldom bear a grudge against any one—he is too lazy for that, if not too good-natured; still less can he bear a grudge against Tolstoy. For, strange as it may seem, the "midwife" continues to be attracted and attached to the mischievous and ungrateful infant. Peace is soon made again. Tolstoy apologizes, with a blush. Turgenev is delighted. Again, they meet almost every day. And then again Tolstoy begins to kick and prick, and Turgenev finally explodes again, and a new peace is made, only to—and so forth. It soon becomes evident that this sort of thing has assumed a chronic character.

As we know, upon his arrival from the Crimea, Tolstoy plunged not only into literary circles, but also into the *beau monde* of Petersburg. Twenty-seven years of age, unexpectedly famous, in

excellent health, and possessed of the ennobling feeling of something important achieved in the past, in the battlefields of Caucasus and Sebastopol, and, what perhaps mattered still more, once more upon the immaculate parquet floors that reflected long rows of gilded mirrors, sparkling crystals and shining porcelains, once more amid the luxury of Court uniforms and the soft, perfumed luster of women's *décolletés*, again in that milieu in which he always belonged—in spite of his philosophy, in spite of all the Rousseaus in the world, imbibing all this with renewed greed—he again, as he had done five years before, rushes from a tea to a reception, from a reception to a concert, cramming his day with as great a number of activities as one man could attend to. The impression he makes on those who happen to meet him in these quarters is exceptionally favorable. Indeed, here, once more, we see two entirely different Tolstoys.

Here is how one Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, his twice removed aunt and an uncannily accurate observer, who makes his acquaintance at this time, describes him (we give a general summary of her impressions, adding to them also some traits from the impressions of other observers):

Not a shade of playing a rôle, not a trace of "Look at me, the hero"; extreme modesty; the easy simplicity and natural reserve of a born man of fashion, combined with the most engaging and inoffensive cheerfulness. When questioned and pressed to speak about Sebastopol—the sad subject is still on everybody's lips—he chisels and paints the scene, in simple, racy Russian (or French) words, with such visual, almost palpable clearness that all listen in silence. But there is nothing of the veteran's habitual "I" in what he tells; the "I" is carefully, scrupulously obscured. Obscured also, as though out of noble, manly shyness, is that indomitable power which is within him; it only sparkles at times in his vivid, constantly changing eyes and in the infinite richness of the expressions on his face.

We perceive here for the first time that peculiarity which will always remain with Tolstoy. Like a typical provincial aristocrat deeply rooted in his soil, he is at home with his equals; he is also fully at home with peasants, soldiers, Cossacks—with all those who spring from the soil. But the "proletariat," whether educated or uneducated, and especially the professional city-intellectuals, are naturally foreign and repugnant to him—this will

always remain in his instinct, no matter how zealously he struggles against it. In this Tolstoy is, and will be, a picturesquely anachronistic Russian *barin* or even *boyarin* (lord) of the days before Peter—of the seventeenth or even of the sixteenth century.

Quarrels and social pursuits can no more prevent Tolstoy from pursuing his destiny than could rifle shots; and in the course of these months, he has not ceased to write. Among other things, he conceived here, in Petersburg, a novelette, "Two Hussars," and, after a month of work, has finished and polished it. Artistically speaking, it is perfect; besides, the mood reflected in it is typical and worthy of mention.

The subject of the novelette is a parallel between two characters—that of a father and of a son. The first part contains a dazzlingly full-blooded life portrait of the father, Count Fyodor Turbin. He is a typical aristocratic hell-raiser of the old Russian school—a duelist, seducer and gambler, but, at the same time, a kind and good-hearted fellow. He is described very realistically, without the slightest trace of prettification or sugar-coating. Yet, instead of being moralistically shocked by his escapades—they are both numerous and brutal—one sympathizes with him and smiles almost approvingly. Indeed, Count Fyodor is somewhat like a Yepishka transplanted into society—a genuine "natural" man, overflowing with the raw energy of youth—an "unconscious" son of his patriarchal age (he is drawn against the background of the first years of the nineteenth century). This ingenuousness and proximity to Nature lend a quality enviably noble and sincere even to his vices and crimes. Now, the second part of the novelette (the scene is twenty years later) contains the story of Count Turbin, the son (we learn from a casual remark that the father was killed in a duel). This young man, in circumstances similar to those of his father (he wants to seduce the daughter of a woman whom his father had seduced) cuts an entirely different figure. He is a man entirely contaminated by the self-conscious spirit of modern civilization; of his father's "natural" greatness he has not inherited a fraction. And, although behaving "decently" (his adventure with the girl does not succeed) and indulging in nothing like his father's scandals, he produces the rather disgusting impression of a well-balanced, calculating and petty egotist.

It is clear that the whole novelette is, on the one hand, the resuscitation of that vision of the "natural man" which obsessed Tolstoy in the Caucasus, and, on the other, a highly artistic and esthetic new attack on the literati of Petersburg, with their liberal religion of progress and civilization. "Progress, civilization?" Tolstoy seems to ask. "Well, I prefer Count Fyodor Turbin's blessed, medieval simplicity and brutality!"

Like all of Tolstoy's preceding works, "Two Hussars" appears in *The Contemporary*. Yet—and this is significant—some of Tolstoy's new friends, as well as the public at large, greet the novelette with an eloquent coldness. Some of the liberal critics even indirectly rebuke Tolstoy: "At the time in which we are living, more serious subjects and more significant works [politically significant?] would be desirable." On the whole, the novelette passes unnoticed, as no work of his has hitherto passed.

Tolstoy is slightly hurt and, above all, astonished. Yet this first little reverse apparently does not fully open his eyes to the fact that his young literary fame will inevitably dwindle, unless he deliberately tries to comply with the prevailing liberal moods and begins to treat, in his fiction, of the burning political subjects which are on everybody's lips and in everybody's minds.

IV

Five months have passed since Tolstoy's arrival in Petersburg; it is the beginning of May 1856, and the first touches of spring have already revived the cold and majestic northern capital. As it has happened with him on every spring of his life, a confused mood of new hopes and, so to speak, of annual spiritual kitchen-cleansing overcomes Tolstoy. Once more, he tries to draw up a balance of the past, to lay out new plans for the future. And, as he proceeds with this, he becomes more and more dissatisfied with himself.

What has he been doing in these months? "Squabbling; indulging in vain pleasures"; worse still, he has been heavily "indulging in dissipation." This, indeed, is true: all of this time he has been burning the candle at both ends. Already Turgenev (while he was Tolstoy's host) complained: "No sooner did he arrive from his battery, . . . than he plunged headlong into carousing: debauchery, gipsies and cards all night long, and then he sleeps like the dead until two in the afternoon." And Tolstoy,

even before the present spiritual kitchen-cleansing, once felt obliged to note: "Rule: Never again to enter a café or a brothel" . . . True, he has also been writing; but literature has never filled more than but a comparatively small part of his life and spirit.

And the old, infinitely childish and yet significantly great sentimental idea reawakens in his soul for the hundredth time: yes, he can be happy only if he is "doing good to men." Yielding again to the call of this reawakened moral spring, overflowing again with this confused and obscure life dream of his, he jots down in his diary the words in which he succeeds in expressing that which is most endurable in his restless and contradictory heart:

"The most powerful weapon for the conquest of real happiness is to emit from oneself, like a spider, without any restraint or meditation, a whole web of love, and to catch into it whomever one encounters—a child, a woman, an octogenarian or a policeman. . . ."

A radical change must take place; and soon his program is ready. Three main purposes align themselves before him. First, he will continue to write, for writing is his profession, and it is chiefly through writing that he can "do good." Second, he must "get married as soon as possible"—of this he has long been dreaming, and this is the only path that can lead him to a "clean, moral life." Third, he will go to Yasnaya and liberate his peasants. Having taken this three-fold decision, he sets out with his usual dash to carry it out. First of all—the liberation of his peasants.

Here it must be explained that, two months before this, the young Emperor had pronounced before the assembly of brilliantly uniformed, silent noblemen of Moscow a speech in which he declared that it was his irrevocable will to abolish serfdom in Russia, and which he had concluded by the historical phrase: "It is better to abolish it from above, than to wait until it begins to abolish itself from below." In spite of all his anti-liberalism, Tolstoy was deeply moved by these words. The abolition of serfdom was, and is, for him a purely moral, not a political issue. During his years of fighting, he had come to know the Russian soldier—that is to say, the peasant dressed in a uniform—with an intimacy that few achieved. He saw with what modesty and with

what fabulous endurance this peasant lives, and with what unostentatious, as though shy, simplicity and resignation he dies. And already then, at Sebastopol, he decided that he could not "own" these men any longer; that it was his duty on his return to set them free. Now, as the abolition of serfdom was officially decided upon, the matter seems to be settled. But no. The enormous reform will require at least four or five years to be worked out, and Tolstoy's reawakened passion for "goodness" does not permit him to wait. He will liberate his men immediately, and on terms more advantageous for them than those which will be probably offered by the Government.

Hence, having taken this decision, he drives over to visit Kavelin, one of the most celebrated experts on the peasant question, consults other authoritative advisers, works for a week, and drafts an elaborate plan of liberation. This plan is interesting. It is no longer a nebulous Utopia, but a sound, perfectly practical and practicable proposition, which fully meets the needs of peasants and which, at the same time, does as little harm as possible to the financial interests of Tolstoy himself.

In essence it is this: The Yassnopolyanian peasants immediately become free men, and for their liberation, they pay nothing. But for the land which the landlord gives them, they pay to him annually five roubles for each *dessyatina* (about three acres), and these payments must continue for thirty years. Each household is to receive four and a half *dessyatinas*—a fair-sized lot for a Russian peasant-household. Of these four and a half *dessyatinas*, only four are to be paid for, the remaining half being given free. If a peasant does not meet his financial obligations in time, he either must do some work for the landlord as a compensation, or restore to the latter a part of his land.

A few days later, this plan is given the official approval of the Ministry for Home Affairs (for such approval is needed for its introduction into practise), and, burning with the thirst for activity, Tolstoy journeys to Yassnaya. But in Moscow, where he stops for a few days, an altogether unexpected thing happens.

He meets here an old University friend, one Dyakov, with whom he was very intimate in his Kazan days, and the latter's sister, who is now married to a Prince A. Obolensky, and with whom he, Tolstoy, once fancied himself in love while at Kazan. At first, he does not even recognize, in this tall, blond, beautiful

woman, the heroine of his youthful dreams. But then, looking at her after all these years, he is strangely moved and perturbed. "I did not expect to meet her again, and this made the emotion which I felt all the more strong." What emotion is it? He does not know, but he is inexplicably happy.

But he meets her again and becomes fully aware of the nature of his emotion. He is again "passionately in love"; the old, long-since-forgotten emotion has unexpectedly reawakened in him with all its poetic overtones of sentimental youth and with a renewed power. Suffering, he thinks "of the happiness which might have been" his, "and which, instead, passed to another and, at that, a very distinguished man." He realizes that the wisest thing would be not to let himself go further, and to flee at once: for what can he expect? The Princess Obolensky is not of those women with whom one can have an intrigue. Besides—is not this typical of Tolstoy!—an experienced man of twenty-seven, he still sees, as he saw at seventeen, "garments of bronze" on every woman with whom he seriously falls in love, and he does not think even for a minute of anything like success with the Princess Obolensky. There is, indeed, no hope. Yet, instead of fleeing, he goes to see her every day, and then lies sleepless for hours, repeating to himself every casual word which she has said to him, and trying to find in every such word a secret promise. Of what? He does not know. And he tries with all his being to hope. For what? He has no idea.

"She told Serge Sukhotin [a friend] in my presence that, when she was betrothed, she had no lovers. Her husband was not there at the moment. Is it possible that she wanted me to understand that she was not in love with him? Later, preparing to leave, she *suddenly* held out her hand to me; tears sparkled in her eyes—she had been crying because of the illness of her little daughter. I was beside myself with happiness. Then it so happened that she accompanied me to the door. . . ." Why did she cry? Was the baby's illness the only cause? And why did she hold out her hand so *suddenly*? And . . .

It is impossible to predict where this love would have led Tolstoy, had it not been for the fact that, a day or two later, the Princess Obolensky suddenly took her children and left with them for Petersburg. Was this from gracious pity for the man whose sentiments she had guessed? We do not know. But there are indi-

cations that it was not that. She seems to have become afraid for herself, for the tranquillity of her own heart.

Upset, with confused emotions battling within him, Tolstoy continues his journey to Yassnaya. As he arrives, a sadly farcical element breaks through his excited sentiments. His eye is wounded by the unfamiliar sight of a large, square, hideously naked space, the silent reminder of his Sebastopol card exploit: the imposing ancestral mansion, with its columns and balconies, with its forty-two rooms and numberless family reminiscences, was sold to a neighboring landlord and bodily transported to his estate. The gray-haired Mlle. Yergolsky greets her nephew in one of the two side-buildings.

v

But Tolstoy does not permit himself to be deterred from his program by the little Moscow episode.

On his very first day in Yassnaya, he convenes the peasant *mir* (assembly) and pronounces a speech which he had previously written out. The scene is not devoid of solemnity: hundreds of heavily bearded men, with their hats off, stand in the shade of old lime-trees and listen in deep silence to the novel and significant words.

"God," Tolstoy begins, "has inspired me with the thought to set you all free." There follows a simple, intelligible and detailed interpretation of the plan of which we know. All its advantages are made clear. All that might frighten a peasant's mind is explained with utmost care and seriousness. And then—the concluding words befit the importance of the moment: "Consider it well, talk it over among yourselves, ask the advice of older and wiser men, and come back in three days to tell me what you have decided concerning this offer; whether you accept it or not. Should you find in it anything that is unfair, anything that I have decided unjustly, tell me, teach me how it ought to be, and I will change it. If you accept and, with God's help, this plan is carried out, I will write all that I have just read to you on official paper, will confirm it in the Court, will give my oath never to deviate from it, and will stipulate in my will that, in case I should die, my heirs shall carry out all that I have undertaken."

Then is a deep silence. Tolstoy had expected questions, animated discussion, perhaps objections, perhaps bargaining; in a

word, the expression of at least some emotion. But no: the faces which only a half-hour ago smiled at their *barin* with such sincere affection (Tolstoy is loved in the village) have now become impenetrable. Hands stroke beards or scratch the backs of heads, and, with respectful bows, the men withdraw, one after the other. At first Tolstoy ignores it; but soon he realizes that this is again as complete a failure as the one which he sustained eight years before, with his first attempt at reform. Why? Meeting some of the peasants who attended the assembly, he tries to question them. Is there anything that they did not like? The answers he receives are evasive.

It is only a week or two later that, piecing together the casual words, hints and remarks which he has happened to hear, he comes to understand what is the matter. His serfs suspect him of the desire to cheat and dupe them: they believe (for an absolutely incomprehensible reason) that, on the day of the coronation, the Czar will give them their landlord's lands free. Tolstoy's plan is, in their eyes, a malignant device by which he wishes to trap them into payments which otherwise will not be demanded of them. . . . The atmosphere in the village remains subversively hostile.

One can easily imagine how deeply Tolstoy is wounded in his finest instincts. It is indeed difficult to "catch" men in a "web of love"—especially if these men be Russian peasants. For the first time, he has come into contact with something dark, potentially sordid and cruel that lies dormant in the masses of these good-natured men, and his super-developed sensitiveness has designed a whole tragic canvas. He immediately decides to write to Count Bludov, the highly influential President of the Department of Laws, whom he had met in Petersburg. The draft of this, in a sense prophetic document, has survived:

" . . . An immediate solution of the peasant question must be found. If, in six months from to-day, the peasants are not liberated, it will give rise to a wholesale conflagration. All is ready for that, and if a criminal hand puts a spark to the latent revolt, the entire country will be ablaze. . . ." The peasants are convinced that the landlords' land is theirs by right. "The question confronting the landlords is one of land or life." The only possible solution is this: the peasants must be set free immediately. This, for the time being, will give surcease to the threatening mood; and then,

as the general peace is re-established, it will be possible to carry out the land reform.

It is truly remarkable how, out of a small local happening, Tolstoy's mind, or rather his instinct, has deduced the striking psychological picture of those "agrarian" upheavals which were to shake Russia in 1905 and 1917. Indeed, if this letter (with the exception of the words on liberation) were written in one of those two years, it would have been perfectly timely.

Yet, having rightly sensed the mood, Tolstoy has made a chronological mistake of about fifty years. A few days later, he comes himself to realize that his fears were exaggerated. Indeed, a perfect calm reigns over all the neighborhood and over all Russia in general and, let it be added, will continue to reign throughout the years preceding the great reform. The Yassnopolyanian peasants, too, are again as patriarchally friendly and affectionate to him as they have always been: as soon as they understand that the *barin* will not force them to accept his plan, the tension passes. Upon reflection, Tolstoy decides not to send the letter to Bludov.

Yet, his relations with his serfs, or, rather, generally the relations existing between the Russian squire and the Russian peasant, continue to preoccupy his mind. "Two strong men," he once jots down, "are fettered to one another by a chain with sharpened edges; it pains both of them, and no sooner does one of them move, than the metal cuts into the flesh of the other, and neither has the freedom to work." One wonders whether there exists anywhere a more concise, clear and impartial definition of the social-economic order on which the Old Russia was built.

Meanwhile, Tolstoy passes his days in supervising his estate, lying and reading in the grass, and often visiting Count Serge in Pirogovo and Countess Marie in Pokrovskoye. The heat, the peace, the cheerful green frame of Yassnaya, the soothing leisure—all this calms Tolstoy. He soon recovers from his new philanthropic failure; neither can the poetic image of the Princess Obolensky long resist the régime of abundant country meals and long after-dinner siestas and, somewhat faded, vanishes into the limbo of the past. Looking back, from the viewpoint of steadied nerves, over the events of the last winter, Tolstoy realizes better than ever before the ridiculousness of his cockerel behavior with regard

to the literati. It is especially the matter of the duel which he had insisted on fighting that plunges him into shame.

"Just imagine," he writes to Nekrassov, "that it is only now, in the country, that, remembering the Longinov affair, I have understood how stupidly and badly I have acted. I most sincerely beg your forgiveness, and will in the same way beg Longinov's forgiveness, as soon as I chance to meet him."

Rested, he resumes his literary pursuits, which he had interrupted for a time in the spring, and his work goes well. "Am working with enthusiasm, even with tears," he notes. Now he works chiefly upon two things—"Youth" (the continuation of "Childhood" and "Adolescence") and "The Morning of a Country Squire" (he had begun that novel in the Caucasus, but it had not progressed well; its subject, Prince Nekklyndov's attempt to set up an earthly paradise in his estate, we already know).

The peasants; the writing—those two points are thus being covered, inasmuch as this depends upon Tolstoy's will. Now, the third point—"to get married as soon as possible." It is questionable whether Tolstoy would make any deliberate attempts in this direction, were it not for the fact that, unexpectedly, Fate offers to him a long-coveted opportunity.

VI

At a distance of a few miles from Yassnaya, there is an estate called Sudakovo, on which the Arsenyevs, three young orphan girls of good family, live with their aunt and a French governess. Tolstoy has known them for a long time, but has paid hardly any attention to them. Now, however, he has been appointed their guardian, and this makes it necessary for him to visit their estate from time to time. In June, Dyakov, Princess Obolensky's brother, whom we have already mentioned and whose estate is also situated in the neighborhood, comes to Yassnaya for a few days. Tolstoy is very fond of this old friend of his. He sometimes has such moods that everything irritates him, including even the adored Mlle. Yergolsky; but the big, blond, smiling Dyakov is a happy exception. Since his Kazan days, Tolstoy has adored this man's refined humor and noble heart. He not only has no secrets from Dyakov, but—which is quite exceptional—willingly listens to his always sound advice and smilingly accepts his always friendly chidings. Dyakov knows Tolstoy's secret dream of get-

ting married, and during this visit, he happens to draw his friend's attention to Valeria Vladimirovna, the eldest of the Arsenyev girls—is she not, indeed, the right girl to make an ideal wife? The suggestion strikes Tolstoy. “Listening to Dyakov, I felt that he was right; this seems to be the best thing that I can do.” On the same day, Tolstoy rides to Sudakovo, and in the course of the week that follows, sees the Arsenyevs every day.

Valeria Vladimirovna, a good-looking brunette of twenty—soft, inoffensive, a little characterless, but girlishly merry and coquettish—has hardly any difficulty in guessing that she is the sole cause of Tolstoy's unexpectedly frequent visits to their house. She seems to have been impressed by him from his very first calls. The dazzling brilliance and humor with which he talks; the original, kind, but commanding straightforwardness of his mind; the serious attention with which this “unusual man” inquires about herself, and, above all, that indefinable and omnipotent thing which is called strength of personality, awaken an immediate response in her. Moreover, Mlle. Vergani, the French governess, like all self-respecting French governesses in Russian families, has immediately sniffed “*un jeune homme à épouser*,” and by little significant remarks, suggestive words and allusions, keeps adding fuel to the flames, directing the girl's feelings into the channels of flirtation.

And Tolstoy? A thing truly unusual for Tolstoy has happened. Instead of “falling madly in love,” as he usually does, and in spite of the girl's good looks, of the poetic veranda and of the unending competition of nightingales in the exuberant lilac bushes that are in full bloom around the Sudakovo house, he is all hesitation, doubt, analysis and Hamlet-like indecision.

The idea of getting married attracts him more than anything in life. Yet it is exactly here that the trouble lies. He had dreamed of “family happiness” for so long, and had drawn in his imagination such an impossibly ideal picture of a “loving, kind, submissive wife,” that now, looking at a living girl and not the fantasy of an abstraction, he is almost disappointed. Indeed, does this good-looking brunette live up to this vision? Will she be sufficiently “kind and submissive”? Besides, is it really time for him to marry, when he still has “to do such a lot of work on himself”? It goes without saying that all these questions would not occur to him if the girl had aroused his sensuality; passion would

have immediately dismissed all logic. But Valeria "hardly appeals to" him "as a woman," and this leaves his mind free to deliberate. Let it be added that, during this time, he seems not to leave the good-looking peasant girls bereft of his attention, either.

Hence, the entries which he makes in his diary during the first two weeks of the acquaintance reflect the most irritating, kaleidoscopic changes and contradictions of opinions and impressions. To-day, he likes Valeria. To-morrow, he does not. "She is without bones, nor fire—quite a noodle!" But no: "She wore a white dress and was charming. I spent one of the most pleasant days of my life." She has happened to talk about dresses and fashions with an interest not unnatural in a girl of her age. And Tolstoy is disgusted: "Dreadful frivolity and light-mindedness. . . . I am afraid that she is of those persons who do not love even their own children!" But the next day she "is an actively loving and unusually kind creature." She is this. No, she is not this. And so on. And so forth.

Meanwhile, time goes on—it is already more than a month that Tolstoy has been visiting Sudakovo—and a rather unusual situation imperceptibly crystallizes. While Tolstoy indulges in indecision, the girl becomes more and more enamored of him, and this naturally makes him something like a victor who is not very eager to reap the fruit of his victory. She, also naturally, becomes the vanquished who does not object to being definitely conquered. The chances are thus unequal. Hence, perhaps unconsciously, he begins to profit by his supremacy, to tyrannize. Scenes like this occur. "I spent the whole day with Valeria. She wore a white dress with open arms, and I saw that her arms were rather unattractive. This angered me. I began to pinch and prick her morally, and did it with such cruelty that, embarrassed, she smiled; in her smile, there were tears. . . ." At moments, Tolstoy understands that he is playing an unfair game: "the idea of marrying" still "frightens" him; if so, what moral right has he to "play with the girl's feelings"? But still he can take no definite decision, and still hopes that to-morrow he will look at the girl once more and become convinced that she is exactly the ideal of his desires. Yet on the morrow he feels that he must needs wait until yet another morrow.

Thus, Valeria's chances are sinking lower and lower when, sud-

denly, something which gives them an unexpected advantage occurs.

VII

At the end of August, Valeria leaves for Moscow, in company with her aunt, to attend the coronation of the Emperor. As soon as she has left, Tolstoy perceives, not without astonishment, that her absence makes him "think about the *dear* Valeria more and more." The fact that he receives no letters from her pains him increasingly. Finally, a letter comes to Mlle. Yergolsky, who is very fond of Valeria. The aunt reads it to the nephew. Valeria speaks of nothing but the coronation, the magnificent ceremonies, dresses, uniforms. A violent indignation, kindred to jealousy, rises in Tolstoy, and he sends the girl the following epistle:

"DEAR VALERIA VLADIMIROVNA:

"Is it possible that some currant red trimming on a dress, the *haute volée* and Emperor's *aides-de-camp*, should always remain for you the climax of happiness? Don't you understand that this is cruel? Why did you write so much of it? You knew how it would harass me. To love the *haute volée*, and not the man, is dishonest and dangerous. . . . How glad I am that they crumpled your 'red currants' at the parade, and how silly it was of this unknown baron to have rescued you from the crowd! If I had been the crowd, I would have smashed that currant and spread it all over your white dress. . . .

"Here, in the country, the weather is wonderful. I am tramping in the forest with my gun, from six to eight, and have had such wonderful times as not a single ober-ober-chamberlain, nor any lady with a dress *broché* with God-knows-what, has ever dreamed of. It is for this reason that I will not come to Moscow, although I could very much wish to do so, in order to boil with anger while looking at you. . . ."

Valeria's chances rise still higher, however, when, on her return, she confesses to Tolstoy that during her stay in Moscow, she had a slight flirtation with Mortier de Fontaine, a famous musician of the day. To Tolstoy, this is a sad blow. For a whole week he suffers from jealousy. It is only now—as he admits—that he begins to have "a genuine feeling for the girl."

Meanwhile, socially speaking, Tolstoy's and especially Valeria's

situation, is getting more and more embarrassing. The latitude accorded to Russian girls in those patriarchal times was extremely narrow and limited. If a young man received in a family looks at one of the daughters too often, the parents begin to exchange significant glances. If he goes so far as to talk to her equally often, he unquestionably becomes, in everybody's eyes, her fiancé. And if, after this, he does not propose, the girl is "scandalized." Now, profiting by the privileges of rural seclusion, Tolstoy has long since done all of these things. What is still more terrible, he would sometimes walk *à deux* with her in the park. He has certainly gone too far! "I have become something like a fiancé, and this vexes me." He becomes afraid that, if matters go on like this, marriage will be forced upon him by circumstances, and this frightens and angers him the more. Every time he arrives in Sudakovo Mlle. Vergani's eyes greet him with a silent "When?" Valeria is also evidently expecting a decisive statement. To hesitate further is impossible and "dishonest."

Finally, on an October day, Tolstoy arrives in Sudakovo and tells Mlle. Vergani a fantastic story about the relations of a M. Khrapovitsky and of a Mlle. Dembitzky. Their feelings, he says, are as yet unclear to themselves. There seems to be love between them, but can real happiness be built on such a hazy substance of feeling? Is it not better for them to separate and test it? And, a few minutes later, he tells Valeria that he is going to Moscow. Valeria takes this news with composure. Yet there is, in her voice, "a note of docile complaint."

In Moscow, for some time thereafter, he thinks constantly of Valeria, and writes her long letters filled with most tiresome moralizing—which sometimes waxes wrathful, as it did in the letter which we have quoted; and sometimes is kindly and pedagogical, as for instance:

"How are you spending your time? Do you work? Do not laugh at this word! To work wisely, sensibly, for goodness and self-improvement, is the greatest thing; but it is good to work even on some trifle, to carve a piece of wood, or something like that. A good moral life and consequently, happiness, are impossible without work. . . ."

Time and new impressions float by. A day comes when he must confess to himself that all is ended between him and Va-



TOLSTOY IN 1886

A portrait by N. N. Gay

leria. He writes it to her. But he feels uneasy and grieved. Is this a bitter after-taste of a hope which did not come true? Or remorse over the pain which, senselessly and unnecessarily, he has caused the girl? "I feel very sad . . . I saw in a dream men massacring one another on the floor, and a brown-skinned woman lying on my chest; naked and bending to me, she whispered . . ." What a Freudian dream with which to terminate this love-affair! He lulls himself by the argument that Valeria herself is to blame: she is not "sufficiently virtuous" to be his wife. Yet he is melancholy.

His literary affairs go well. Some of his works ("Childhood," "Adolescence," the "Sebastopol Stories" and the Caucasian stories) have just appeared in a little two-volume set of his collected works. "Youth" will appear in *The Contemporary*, and "The Morning of a Country Squire" in another review, *The Annals of the Fatherland*. Yet, all this interests and diverts him but little. His ancient irritation against the literati has awakened in him with renewed force. "The gatherings of writers and scholars are repellent to me. . . . They are all disgusting." He does not feel at ease in the capitals.

He feels, too, that he has failed in his practical enterprises. The attempt to organize a new order of things at Yassnaya, to get settled and "strike root," has resulted in nothing. He is still without "station in life," without any "practical activity." Yet another year of his life has been "wasted." He thinks for a while, and decides to go abroad, in order to "change his ideas," to refresh himself.

On the eve of his departure, he receives a letter from Valeria. The girl apparently is suffering. Although she does not ask it directly, her whole letter is a question—what has she done to have caused this rupture in their relations? He sends her a rather cold answer:

" . . . I will never cease to love you, as I have always loved you; that is to say, to be your friend. . . . But—how can I help it? I cannot answer you with that feeling which your kind heart is ready to offer to me. . . ."

Indeed, the memory of Valeria now only irritates him. The fact is that recently he has met the Baroness Mengden, a charming married woman. And he notes: "What wonderful relations may yet exist between man and woman! Why is it that I do not ex-

perience such delight while being with my sister? Perhaps the greatest charm consists in standing on the threshold of love." It is doubtful, however, whether this time he would have retained himself just "on the threshold," were it not for the fact that he had to leave.

CHAPTER VII

FRIENDSHIP AND DEATH

I

Tolstoy set out for Europe with that preconceived contempt of the "putrid Western civilization" which had long since become fixed in his mind and the repercussions of which had been heard in his skirmishes with Turgenev. But no sooner did he arrive at Paris than a complete change came over his attitude. He not only magnanimously absolved the West of all its grievous faults, but he even became enthusiastically enamored of it. The theatrical exquisiteness of the Tuileries; the subtle, ballet-like sumptuousness of the faded palaces; the ennobling reminiscences of the past and the elegant, exuberant fountain of the ever-youthful present—this "putrefaction," invented by the Russian Slavophiles, proved to him a fascinating thing indeed. At times, Tolstoy still tried to grumble against this and that; yet, on the whole, he could not help being carried away, dazzled. Among the literary men whom he had met in Petersburg, there was one Botkin, a fine critic and a modest man, with whom he became somewhat friendly. It is to him that he now poured out his impressions:

"... I have been in Paris for almost two months, and I do not yet foresee the time when this city will lose its attractiveness for me. . . . I am terribly ignorant: nowhere have I felt my ignorance as sorely as I feel it here. . . . But, being in this city, I feel that my case is not hopeless—that I can still accomplish something towards remedying it. . . . Moreover, this social freedom, of which we have even no conception in Russia—well, all this will hold me in Paris for at least another two months. . . ."

Thus, even the "social freedom" of the West is appreciated. As to his "ignorance," the discovery is perhaps somewhat exaggerated, though not unfounded. Indeed, Tolstoy is, in a way, singularly provincial. He has read, learned and, above all, thought a great deal—indeed, much more than he realizes—yet

he has done it all by excerpts, at random, and without system. From his very first days in Paris, he set out to "cure himself" of these faults.

He began to take lessons in English and Italian (in both of which languages he is rather weak), to attend all imaginable kinds of lectures (from art and history to sociology) at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, to scamper through the Louvre and other museums, to study everything, by every possible means. He firmly determined to conquer all the intricacies of this flourishing Western culture, which he had hitherto brushed aside in the gallant cavalry attack of his progress.

Moreover, he found himself perpetually in the happy condition of having no limit to his energies. He became acquainted with a number of distinguished Russian families living in the French capital, found leisure to court a Princess Lvov and a Princess Troubetzkoy, spared between times some of his attention for the fashionable Parisian cocottes, and indulged in long conversations with Turgenev, Nekrassov, Pletnyov and some other literary friends and enemies who happened to be in Paris at the time.

But the day after he wrote the letter to Botkin quoted above, something happened which, at one stroke, upset all of his occupations. Out of pure curiosity, he went to see the execution of a criminal on the guillotine. Standing in the crowd, he watched the preparations without experiencing any particular emotion. But when the man's head was separated from "the white, fat body" and both "fell with a thud into the wooden box below the machine," he staggered, on the point of fainting. So this was the "European culture" by which he had permitted himself to be carried away!

"... This spectacle made such an impression on me that I will not be able to overcome it for a long time," he writes again to Botkin. "I witnessed a great many horrors during the war and in the Caucasus. Yet, if a man had been torn to pieces before my eyes, it would not have been as horrible as this intricate and elegant machine, with the assistance of which they killed, in a moment, a strong, fresh, healthy human being. There, in the war, was a blind, yet a genuine human passion, while here was only a highly refined tranquillity and comfort in the assassination, and nothing at all impressive. The impertinent, brazen desire to dispense justice, to do God's will—a justice which is different

in the mouth of each lawyer . . . And the crowd—how repellent it was! A father explaining to his little girl how neatly and conveniently the machine operates!

“Laws decreed by men—nonsense! It is true that the State is a conspiracy for the demoralization of its citizens . . . And yet men do not know how to pass from this order of things to socialism! What is to be done, then? What can those do, who feel as I do? . . . I understand religious, moral and esthetic laws . . . but political laws appear to me as such prodigious lies that I do not even see how this one or that one among them can be better or worse than the others. The fact that I understand it alleviates, to some degree at least, the horror of the impression . . . What is certain is that henceforward *I shall never serve any Government . . .*”

The sentiment expressed in this letter is repeated in an entry in the diary: “All Governments in this world are equal, in the measure of the good and evil that they do. The only ideal is anarchy.”

Thus, Buddha again rode out of his palace, and Buddha's eyes again beheld the spectacle of human misery . . . All this may be, in a way, as comical as it is passionately human and pathetic. Did Tolstoy not know before that capital punishment existed in all European countries? And if he was aware of it, whence this sudden explosion of sensibility? But we know that Tolstoy always was abnormally susceptible to visual impressions. As to this particular discovery, it is significant. Of course, he will soon get over it. Yet this is one of the first glimpses that we are afforded of the future Tolstoy. The anarchist is already conceived, if he is not yet actually born.

After this, Tolstoy feels that he cannot endure Paris any longer. He hates it now just as violently as he had adored it two days ago. Whence should he betake himself? At this moment, he learns that the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, that very twice-removed aunt of his whose acquaintance he had made in Petersburg during the last winter (and whose description of him in society we have summarized in the last chapter), is spending the summer in Switzerland. They did not meet very often at the capital, and had not been intimate; yet the few conversations which they had had, left a deep impression upon him. He felt in her a mind kindred to his own. He liked her, and he felt

that she in turn liked him. Now, after his sad Parisian experience, he feels that he must pour out his agitation to some sympathetic listener, and so he rides to Geneva. On the very morrow of his arrival, he is ushered into her drawing-room:

"I have come direct from Paris. I was so disgusted with that city that I almost turned mad. The things I saw there! First of all, in the *maisons garnies* where I lived, there were thirty-six couples, of whom nineteen were unmarried. That outraged me terribly. Then, wishing to test myself, I went to see the decapitation of a criminal, after which I ceased to eat, could not sleep, and did not know what to do with myself. Happily, I learned that you were in Geneva, and have rushed to see you, in the hope that you would save me."

II

The Countess Alexandra Andreyevna, or Alexandrine, as Tolstoy, profiting by the privileges of relationship, calls her, is one of the most interesting Russian women of her time. Since her early youth (she is now forty) she has been a lady-in-waiting at the Court of St. Petersburg. Even the late Emperor Nicholas I, who was rather difficult to please, showed respect for her unusual mind and uncompromisingly straightforward character; and as to his successor, Alexander II, he showers on her many tokens of his exceptional esteem and regard, and will continue thus to distinguish her until the end of his reign. The enviable position which this secures for her in the capital, as well as her personal attractions (she is still good-looking, although a little heavy) have combined to surround her with numerous suitors. But she has regularly rejected them, and will die a spinster. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, active, extremely energetic and passionate as she is in all her devotions, she is so devoted to the Romanov family that she does not wish to permit herself to be torn away from it by any other allegiances; yet it may be that the cause lies still deeper. Fervently religious in the most orthodox sense of the word, with a strong inclination to mysticism, she is by instinct pre-eminently a Christian ascetic, and in the noble architecture of her spiritual world, there is something of a monastic character. No one would surmise this, however, when meeting her in society, where she is a jovial and witty woman of fashion, displaying no aspect of Puritanism. The only thing that

outwardly betrays her deeper self is her never-failing readiness to respond to any plea of the suffering, and to help any one by any means which might be at her command.

All this makes the Countess Alexandra a veritable feminine Mohican of the old, aristocratic Russia; yet, she combines with it an exceptionally wide and sophisticated European erudition and culture. In the realm of thought and of the arts, she is as much at home as in church or palace. Turgenev and Goncharov are among the admirers of her extraordinarily perceptive, always gracefully original and independent mind, as will be Daudet, Dostoevsky and many others. If she so desired, she might easily become the mistress of a leading literary salon. But she is one of those rare persons to whom vanity is an absolutely unknown thing; if fame were no more difficult to pick up than a coin laying on the ground, she would hardly bother to stoop. In this, as in everything else, she is a lady of the ancient régime.

Here, at Geneva, the Countess Alexandra lives in the luxurious Villa Bocage with the Grand Duchess Marie Nicholayevna, the Emperor's sister. She is, at the present time, the preceptress of the latter's children. Her duties leave her much leisure, and in the weeks following Tolstoy's arrival, the relatives meet almost every day. The most cordial of relationships is immediately established between them. Tolstoy, of course, soon completely forgets about the Parisian decapitation, and is in one of his happiest and most frolicsome moods. He once declares to the Countess Alexandra that he is going to call her "grandmother": "You are too young to be my aunt!" Laughingly, she agrees, and he becomes henceforth her "grandson." It is the fairy-like Swiss spring. Both of them adore Nature. "Nature," as Tolstoy will tell her, "gives one the supreme delight of forgetting everything about one's precious self; one no longer sees how one lives; the past and the future vanish; the present alone, like a thread, unrolls itself and disappears." They go together on expeditions into the mountains, ascend the Salève or board the little ship on the Lake of Geneva and float for hours on the azure, mirror-like waters, in the midst of the eternal peace and beauty. The "grandmother" has introduced the "grandson" to all of her friends, and these friends often accompany them. Tolstoy entertains them all. The Grand Duchess' children declare that there is no other man like him—he can eat such a great number of cherries and invent

such a profusion of escapades, that to forget him would be impossible. It is especially two elderly gentlemen, Pushchin and Ryabinin, however, who fall under his spell. They are literally rejuvenated, and all three often behave in such manner that the whole little Russian group is convulsed with laughter.

On one occasion, the Countess Alexandra goes with her disciples to Vevey, where they stop at a hotel. "No sooner did we sit down at table than the *kölner* announced that three persons were waiting for me downstairs . . . Guessing what was afoot, I quickly went into the hall. There they were standing, 'the three,' wrapped in enormous *Almavivas*, with long plumes on fantastic hats. Like true traveling musicians, they put the music-notes on the floor. Instead of instruments, they carried sticks. No sooner did I appear than a dreadful cacophony, a veritable cats' concert started. There were wild voices and the rattle of sticks . . ."

Tolstoy calls that kind of diversion "running with one's tail up."

But the relationship between the aunt and the nephew does not end here. With every day, their friendship becomes deeper and more intimate. Both "dream of goodness"; both are "enthusiasts and analysts," and essentially religious beings; and, discovering this mutual sentiment in one another, both glow with the warmest mutual affection. In spite of his friendliness, Tolstoy has hitherto been lonely: other than Dyakov, he has had no friends. Unexpectedly—oh, Fate!—that decapitation of a criminal in Paris has given him one. Indeed, the Countess Alexandra is the first person to whom he can pour out all of his self, without the slightest reticence. For the first time, his spirit experiences the delight of being handled and caressed by sympathetic, unfailingly understanding and infinitely tactful fingers—feminine fingers, at that—and his as yet omnipotent sentimentality wholly surrenders itself to this voluptuous delight. There is no end to his most intimate confessions, self-disclosures, self-dissections and philosophizings. As for her, she is dazzled by the untold chaotic wealth and brilliancy of the spirit that she so plays upon, and is touched by the thirst with which it pants for her caresses. .

For some inexplicable reason—perhaps out of a kind of jealousy—Tolstoy is no longer of the arrogant, aristocratic disposition of his earlier years. He often good-naturedly teases the Countess Alexandra about her high position at the Court—which, by the

way, he has termed "The Chimney," by reason of the sooty blackness which encompasses it. He will write to her later: "To think that such an incomparable grandmother should live—where? In the Chimney! That is certainly much more astonishing than if a new dill pickle should grow on a rose-bush!" Smiling, she returns the teasing—and it is here that one gets a glimpse of her uncanny mind. How callow he is, the "dear boy," in spite of his twenty-eight years! "I am afraid for you, grandson. I am afraid of your ethereal, idealistic absurdities; of your vanity, which often prompts you to create or re-create things that have long since been excellently created and established; and even of your love of truth, which, through its capricious complication and sophistication, often seduces you far away from the truth and from naturalness." Yet, alongside of these unmistakably hitting ironies, she does not dissimulate what she foresees for him: "*Vous êtes un vaisseau qui se construit et qui n'est pas encore lancé à flot. Quand je le verrai voguer majestueusement, du fond de la mer où je barbotte je m'écrierai: 'Saint Léon, priez pour nous!'*" This loving understanding of both his absurdness and genius fills Tolstoy with emotion. No one has hitherto spoken to him so frankly. "The dear, incomparable Alexandrine! . . . I have met no other woman who could reach to her knee!" Yes, at last he has found a true friend.

Spiritual harmony between two high-strung and sentimental beings . . . yes, no doubt! Yet, there is something else, too. Upon his arrival in Geneva, Tolstoy had noted: "Alexandrine has a charming smile . . ." Then, there was that fairy-like frame of the Swiss spring, the perfume of the flourishing mountains, the azure mirror of the lake. And soon he confesses: "If she were but ten years younger, I should certainly fall in love with her . . ." But he is not yet twenty-nine, and she is forty. This time he finds in himself enough self-control to restrain himself "on the threshold of love." This, however, does not prevent a subtler note of flirtation from tinging their friendship; it does not preclude their "*amitié*" from being something of an "*amitié amoureuse*." This useless, and therefore all the more poignant coquetry expresses itself on both sides with a rare fineness. He sparkles with such spontaneous pyrotechnics of paradoxes, artistic images and wit as he hardly ever knew he was capable of; and she too

unfolds before him such richnesses of understanding and such a resilience and refinement of intellect as her modesty would hardly have permitted her to exhibit to any one else.

But three months have thus passed. It is time to leave Geneva. Before returning to Russia, Tolstoy wishes to visit Holland and England, then return to Paris and in the fall make a long tour of Italy. Refreshed, he parts from his friend and rides to Berne. At night, in the train, he feels happy, as he has seldom felt. The other passengers sleep; he stands at an open window. It is one of those excellent Swiss nights, when the heat bequeathed by the day mingles with the cool waves descending from the mountains. "From a humid meadow lit by the moon, the whistling of corn-crakes and the croaking of frogs are heard, and something irresistibly lures me there. But, should I alight, something would lure me further and further on. It is not with delight that the beauty of Nature fills me, but with some inexpressible, sweet pain . . ." It is on such a night, too, that he will note soon afterwards: "What is it that I so ardently desire? I do not know; but surely it is not any earthly thing. How can one refuse to believe in the immortality of the soul, when one apprehends in one's spirit such immeasurable grandeur?"

III

Both out of Geneva and out of Berne Tolstoy did a great deal of traveling. He covered all of Savoy, passed by Saint Bernard, and crossed Switzerland from Montreux to Interlaken and Thoune. He never wearied of admiring landscapes and panoramas, but most of the people he happened to observe he decidedly disliked. Superannuated English maidens, with long feet and still longer teeth, who abound in every Continental hotel; the middle-class Frenchmen, "who never fail to mention in their conversation '*ma pauvre mère*,'" etc., etc.—his eye quickly discerned and classified all of those tourist types which are to be met with everywhere. His "anarchical" mood passed, yet, unlike most of the Russians of his time, he remained unimpressed by the West. Its democracy, as exemplified in Switzerland, merely repelled him. He perceived in it something of the atmosphere of a well-run grocery store. "Absence of poetry . . . prevailing mediocrity . . . amiable, jovial, stupid people—grown-up chil-

dren . . . Some one tore a man's coat, and he demanded that a one franc compensation should be paid to him; the crowd approved of this and supported his claim . . . A Swiss adjusting his suspenders in public, at a café . . .”

Yet, on the whole, he spent his time in Switzerland very well; and, at the beginning of August, when he leaves Berne to carry out the plan of his further travels, he is in excellent spirits. On his way to Holland, he stops for several days in Baden and visits the famous roulette wheels in the Casino of that city. The throng of international adventurers, cocottes, suspicious types and fortune-seekers there repels him. Yet he puts a few francs on one of the numbers of the green cloth table and loses them. This proves to be fatal.

“August 6 [that is, the next day]. Roulette from morning to night. Lost, but towards the end of the day, won back . . .

“August 7. In the morning, felt ill; roulette till six. Lost all to the last penny; dined at home; am suffering terribly . . .

“August 8. Borrowed, from a Frenchman, two hundred roubles, and lost them . . . Won't play any more; am becoming more calm . . .”

Holland, London, Italy—all this has gone to the dogs; he does not even know how he is going to reach Russia again. Here, however, unexpected assistance comes to him—a Russian friend lends him a large sum of money. But that night, he again notes:

“August 9. Took a bath, went there again, and lost all. Pig!”

“Crushed and ashamed,” he loses all control over himself and tries to find consolation in the atmosphere of cheap cocottes, night restaurants, and the like. “Am among scoundrels, and am myself the greatest scoundrel of them all.” Turgenev, who has arrived in Baden, tries to comfort him; but the money which he borrows from Turgenev he likewise leaves on the green cloth of the Casino.

The rescue comes from the Countess Alexandra. At the beginning of his Baden misfortunes, he had conquered his shame and had written to her, confessing his “downfall” and asking for money. Now her remittance and letter arrive. The thought that she would experience a certain disgust at seeing him in such a miserable and undignified light, tormented him not less than his losses, and he awaited her letter with painful expectation. But no,—what he reads are tender, almost motherly words:

"Je n'éprouve pas le moindre désir de vous gronder, mon cher garçon, mais je mentirais en disant que je ne suis pas affligée de votre faiblesse . . . J'ai emporté un délicieux souvenir de notre [dernière] entrevue . . . et vous aurez beaucoup à faire avant de réussir à me le gâter . . . Écrivez moi quelques lignes—je voudrais vous savoir hors du marais de Baden et reconcilié avec vous-même . . ."

Tolstoy is moved to tears. "The unique Sasha [Alexandra]! A marvel! A delight! Have never met such a woman!" The mournful thoughts with which he sets out on his way to Russia are obliterated by the feeling that he is "no longer wholly alone in the world."

It is interesting to note that, six years hence, the Casino of Baden will witness the grotesque tragedy of another young Russian. Enchanted by the green cloth with its white numbers, he will likewise, in the delirium of frenzied passion, stake and lose, borrow and lose again, and finally pawn his watch, his coat—everything. He will go even further; emerging for the last time from the walls of this building, he will stand, in utter despair, actually on the verge of suicide. Perhaps it is only because of the presence of his mistress, the "fatal Pauline," that he will not commit it. The name of this young Russian will be Fyodor Dostoevsky.

IV

Russia greets Tolstoy somewhat inhospitably. During his very first week in Petersburg, and then at Yassnaya, he sees "how a lady in the street beats her chambermaid with a stick; . . . how an official almost knocks the soul out of a seventy-year-old beggar who has chanced to jostle him;" and how his, Tolstoy's, own overseer cruelly ill-treats some of his peasants. During his travels, he has forgotten the "patriarchal brutality" of his Fatherland, and now it suddenly shocks him, as it had never done before. "The poverty of people and the sufferings of animals are horrible . . . Russia is disgusting—I simply cannot like it." No, after all, the hypocritical West was not so bad!

From Yassnaya Polyana, he goes back to Petersburg and, a week later, to Moscow, where he proposes to spend the winter. In each of these capitals, a serious literary disappointment awaits him.

During his stay in Switzerland, he had spent a few days in Lu-

cerne, and had chanced there to participate in the following episode. An old, wandering actor sang before the veranda of a luxurious hotel, filled with wealthy English and French tourists. When he finished and held out his hat, not a single person troubled to throw him a centime, although all had listened to his song with apparent pleasure. Tolstoy, who was among the elegant crowd, was aroused by this indifference to a high pitch of indignation. He immediately ran down the steps, took the singer by the arm, led him back to the veranda, seated him beside himself and ordered him an excellent supper. Some of the guests looked scandalized, but kept silent. On the very morrow of that happening, Tolstoy decided to describe it in a story, which he entitled "Lucerne." He worked with enthusiasm, finished it within three days, and dispatched it to *The Contemporary*.

The publication of "Lucerne" coincided with Tolstoy's homecoming. And living now in Petersburg and Moscow, he observes the reaction of the critics and of the public. This reaction is most unfavorable. The story turns out to be a glaring failure—a much more glaring failure, indeed, than the "Two Hussars." All the reviewers notice it and all, with perfect sincerity, express their dissatisfaction. "Weak from beginning to end . . . A work which would hardly deserve any mention at all, were it not for the fact that it bears the signature of Count Tolstoy . . . Both the workmanship of the details and the story as a whole are decidedly unsatisfactory . . ."

One must admit that, this time, the critics are not at all unjust to Tolstoy. "Lucerne" is as superlatively bad as only it could be. The fact is that, in his preceding works, Tolstoy was pre-eminently an artist. And as a pure artist capturing life—the very mysterious essence of life—in images, he is, and always will be, omnipotent. It is true that in all he wrote he continuously touched upon the moral and philosophic problems that preoccupied him; they are to be encountered in "Childhood," as well as in "Sebastopol Stories"; in "Youth" and in "The Morning of a Country Squire." But here Tolstoy succeeded in sublimating them into art, in working them, so to speak, without a residue, into the tissue of living images. Nowhere did bias pierce this tissue, moralization destroy esthetics. Now, it is exactly this misfortune that happened to "Lucerne." In some of its descriptive passages, the freshness of Tolstoy's talent sparkles in its full vigor.

But on the whole, the story of the singer is told with a tiresome sentimentality and, artistically speaking, leads nowhere. Worse, long paragraphs of vapid preachings are appended to it: "How could you, Christians . . . you, human beings . . . give back to a man whose song gave you moments of enjoyment nothing but cold irony? . . . Is this the equality for which so much blood was shed, so many crimes committed? . . . Or is equality only a word?"—and so forth, along highly homiletic lines.

Tolstoy is seriously grieved. "My [literary] reputation has sunk very low—it hardly creeps, somewhere at the bottom." Yet, with obstinacy and irritation, he refuses to understand what is wrong with "Lucerne." Moreover, he deliberately decides to continue in the same vein.

As though forecasting the tragedy which will be enacted thirty years hence, the whimsical moralist begins to kick in him for the first time against the great artist. "Art for art's sake?" No. He has a message to deliver. "I must be daring. It is not beautiful things I want . . . I know that I have a great deal to say, and that I have the power to say it. How the public will receive it, I do not care." What message will it be? He himself does not seem to know very clearly. Nevertheless, the moralistic impulse is unconquerable. And this leads to a second failure.

In the course of the preceding winter, before he went on his trip abroad, he had met, somewhere, one Kizevetter, a talented violinist, but a miserable, cretin-like being. While in Switzerland, he began to write "Albert," a story with this Kizevetter as its central character. Now he rewrites and finishes it. It is again a series of decidedly inept appeals to human pity, coupled with rather nebulous demonstrations of the purifying and sublimating effect which music exerts upon men's souls. Tolstoy sends it to Nekrassov, but then a humiliating thing occurs—Nekrassov declines to print it.

It is true that, a few months later, Nekrassov will change his mind, in order not to quarrel with Tolstoy: once more rewritten and considerably shortened, "Albert" will appear in his monthly.

But this cannot break Tolstoy's obstinacy. The next story which he writes in the course of this winter is again moralistic. Yet this time he almost wins. This new story is "Three Deaths." First, a wealthy lady dies of consumption. To her very last day, her skeleton-like fingers cling to life; she feels that the fatal

moment is approaching, and yet she struggles on and tries to hope. Then a peasant dies. With the resignation of a saint—or of a hopeless savage—he addresses his last requests to a driver and a cook, finding the right man to whom to bequeath his new high boots; and this death Tolstoy seems to admire. Finally, a tree dies in a forest, under the ax of wood-cutters. The surviving trees stretch out their boughs into the emptiness which has been liberated by its fall. Perhaps the neatness of this three-fold parallel is too suggestive to be fully artistic. Yet the story is impressive, and there is power in it; there are unexpected, poignant overtones, and it is enshrouded in a meaningful sadness.

On the whole, this winter in Moscow drags on slowly and monotonously. As usual, Tolstoy spends much of his time in society, striving to amuse himself; yet he is melancholy more often than ever before. To a certain extent, this may be ascribed to his literary reverses; his faith in himself is again shaken, and he again begins to believe in earnest that he is merely a dilettante who has "written himself out." Yet there is something else, too. At times, hitherto unexperienced moods pervade him. ". . . Laziness, melancholy, boredom. It seems that all is nonsense. The ideal is unattainable, and I have already wrecked my life. Work, a little fame, money—what is it all for? . . . The eternal night is approaching. I feel all the time that soon I shall die." The years he spent in the war had strongly developed his natural tendency to superstition. Now, in his sad moments, the great rationalist often draws a card from the deck and briskly turns away if it happens to be the ten of spades ("death"), or any other such harbinger of misfortune. In the fall of the coming year he will be thirty, and for some unknown reason, this approaching date assumes for him a magical meaning—it will be, he believes, the day of his death.

The happiest hours of this winter are those which he spends with the Countess Alexandra, on his trips to Petersburg, in her apartment on the second floor of the Mariinsky Palace. She has definitely become "the high patroness of his soul." He invariably imparts to her his every new mood and philosophizing. Here are, for instance, some of the lines which he wrote to her:

". . . It is only honest anxiety, struggle and work, all based on love, that make up what we call happiness. And what is

happiness? A silly word—not happiness, but ‘all is well!’ . . . It makes me laugh when I look back at myself thinking, as I believe you still think, that one can build for oneself a happy, honest and calm little world where there are no mistakes, no repentance, no muddling . . . Ridiculous! It cannot be done, Granny . . . To live honestly, one must strain, get confused, struggle, blunder, begin and leave off, and begin again to leave off once more, and fight, and suffer losses. That is why the evil side of our souls craves tranquillity, not realizing that its attainment would mean the peril of all that is beautiful, not human, but divine, in us. There is a sermon for you, Granny! . . .”

But the winter draws to an end. With the first breath of April, Tolstoy shakes the ashes of Moscow from his feet and goes to Yassnaya. There, all of his winter sadness disappears overnight.

“Hello, Granny! The spring!

“Is not life wonderful for good people? Even for men like myself it is sometimes a splendid thing. In the world, in the air, everywhere, there are hopes for the future, for an excellent future!

“Sometimes I fancy, in my folly, that spring and happiness are coming, not only for Nature, but for me, as well . . . When I am reasoning coldly, I realize very well that I am an old, frozen, rotten and, at that, somewhat stewed potato; but the spring has such an influence on me that I often catch myself dreaming that I am a young plant which, together with other plants, is blossoming in God’s world for the first time . . . On this occasion such washings and whitewashings and inner cleansings are going on as no person who has not experienced a mood of that kind can imagine. Piles of old rubbish, silly conventionalities, laziness, selfishness, all the vices—everything goes overboard! Make room for the unusual plant which swells its buds and grows together with the spring! It is sad to remember how many times I did all of it, like a cook on Saturdays, and always to no purpose; yet again, this self-deception makes me happy, and again I earnestly believe at times that the new and miraculous flower will presently blossom . . .”

V

Count Nicholas Nicholayevich, who had meanwhile left the military service, is now living at his Nicholskoye estate, not far

from Yassnaya. To Tolstoy, this is a matter for rejoicing. This refined and modest man has always been his favorite brother.

During this summer, Tolstoy is, above all, a provincial country squire. The business of plowing and sowing and the prices of wheat and potatoes interest him more than anything else. Perhaps it is the blood of his ancestors, who had been always "true to the land," that begins to speak in him. Yet it is something else, too: it is almost a new passion. The sky, the native soil, the simple work, the simple joy which one experiences while gazing over one's rising fields, this God-given fruit of blessed labor—what can be more healthy and more "natural" than that? All day long he inspects his fields, giving instructions (and often very naïve ones) to his overseers. In spare hours, he reads, plays the piano and, especially, engages in gymnastic exercises, which also keep one close to Nature and, moreover, help to suppress "carnal desire." In a word, he is a thorough-going enlightened "country-bear," and this new rôle greatly amuses him. He even looks the part. Recently, he has ceased to shave, and his chin has become covered with that unruly, long beard, fusing with exuberant side-whiskers and mustaches, which is so familiar to us in his later portraits. If only he could get married, his happiness would be complete; of this desideratum, he still dreams with the most sentimental sighs.

The modest Count Nicholas looks at all this with that loving, ironical smile with which he has always looked at the mental transformations of his brother. "Our little Leo," he tells a friend, "is doing his best to initiate himself into the habits of a provincial squire with which he, as all of us brothers, is acquainted but superficially. I do not know, however, what will come of it. As usual, he wants to learn everything in the world, including gymnastics, at one stroke. For this purpose, an iron bar has been installed in the garden, beside his windows . . . You ought to see how the *starosta* [peasant alderman] looks at it. 'I come to the *barin*,' he says, 'to take his orders, and I find the *barin*, with a red sweater on, hooked to that iron stick by one leg, swinging with his head down, his face blood-shot, his hair in disorder. One does not very well know what to do: to listen to his orders, or to watch him.'" The *barin* is certainly a crank; for what self-respecting squire would do such unseemly things?

During this summer, Tolstoy tries for the first time to do the

work of a simple agricultural laborer, and is delighted with the results of this experiment. Dressed in a simple Russian peasant shirt, with a strap around his waist, he spends hours at the plow. Count Nicholas understands the philosophic overtones of this game, too. "The dear Leo has liked the way Yufan, the workman, thrusts out his elbows while plowing. A theory is ready: Yufan is for him the symbol of agricultural strength, something like Mikula Selyaninovich [the fabulous peasant-hero of the Russian folklore]. He himself takes the plow and, likewise thrusting out his elbows, begins to 'Yufanize.'"

But this is only a passing mood. In his new zeal for administering his farm, Tolstoy remains a squire, above all. And sometimes he treats his serfs not without patriarchal harshness. "To-day," he once notes, "Ryezun [a peasant] told lies; I became angry and, yielding to that dreadful habit, commanded: 'Whip him!' . . . Then I apologized to him and gave him three roubles, but the whole episode was torturing . . ."

This year, living in Yassnaya, Tolstoy is surrounded with acquaintances. Turgenev is spending part of the summer nearby, at Spasskoye; Foeth-Shenshin, a poet whose acquaintance Tolstoy made on his return from Sebastopol (and whose record of one of the Turgenev-Tolstoy skirmishes we have quoted in a preceding chapter) also lives in the neighborhood, on his little country estate. These three, all of whom are inveterate hunters, together with Count Nicholas, often gather in the house of one of the group and go together on hunting parties. Foeth and Turgenev become very intimate with Count Nicholas. The famous novelist says of him: "Nicholas Tolstoy lacks only one quality to become a great writer—vanity." This is not an exaggeration: this unostentatious man recently wrote the "Hunting in the Caucasus," a book which is a masterpiece of epic description. The fact is not without significance; it appears that literary talent is not confined to only one member of the Tolstoy family.

Here, in these surroundings of birch trees and country homes, Tolstoy hardly ever quarrels with Turgenev; generally speaking, their relations have considerably improved. This gladdens him. "Judging by this, I have at last matured."

With Foeth, Tolstoy is daily becoming more and more friendly. Foeth is a type. At this epoch, when politics have thrust poetry

into the background, he is not popular. But posterity will justly recognize in him the greatest Russian lyric poet of the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the ethereal shades and depths of his lisping, verbal music are incomparable, and some of his contemporaries, such as Tolstoy and Turgenev, know how to appreciate its beauty. But in life, Foeth is just as fundamental, weighty and matter-of-fact as he is ethereally light in poetry. Very stingy, business-like to the highest degree and extraordinarily callous, he works sturdily and doggedly at the aggrandizement of his fortune, which, although he comes of old aristocratic stock, is quite small. In politics, he is medieval: a rabid reactionary, he is decidedly opposed to the emancipation of the serfs. Toward his wife, he is rather despotic; but with his friends, lavishly gracious and hospitable. Patriarchal good-nature combines in him with the heavy fist of an efficient corporal. All this would make him a befitting figure in the Russia of the sixteenth century; but neither is he out of place in the Russia of his own time, for there co-exist in him, along with his medievalism, the brilliant polish of an ex-Guards officer and a fine, responsive intelligence. A peculiarity of his speech typifies this combination very well: the first moment after he opens his mouth, quaint basso roars or grunts emerge from his throat; but then there slowly flows an exquisitely elegant, polished speech, interwoven with flatteries, speckled with gem-like French witticisms. His movements are dignified and unhurried and his words are weighty and to the point; but he seldom speaks.

Strangely, Tolstoy likes everything in Foeth, perhaps with something of that feeling with which one would like a not exactly beautiful, but a very stylish, pedigreed bulldog. Besides, Foeth's poised fundamentality awakens in him the sensation of a mischievous youngster before a good-natured, but authoritative father. Once, pressed by some agricultural needs, he will ask Foeth to lend him some money. Pretending not to hear, Foeth slowly turns away; but Tolstoy smiles and likes even that.

VI

The harvest time is well over. The wheat is sold, the winter sowings made, and, finally, a thick white carpet envelops the countryside; yet Tolstoy still lingers at Yassnaya. Late in Decem-

ber, Foeth invites him to participate in a large bear hunt which is being organized by some friends. This is, as usual, quite an event, in which, besides a score of gentlemen, dozens of peasants participate as assistants. When the gentlemen have taken their places on the lawn before the forest, this army of "bear-drivers," armed with sticks, whistles, spades, etc., marches in chain-formation from the other end of the forest, frightening the animals by shouts and noises and directing them within range of the hunters' bullets. The first day passes fortunately for Tolstoy—he kills a large bear. On the second day, the carpet of snow becomes so thick that it reaches to one's waist, and the hunters are advised to shovel out around their positions a few square feet, so as to leave at least some free space for maneuvering. Tolstoy, of course, jests and objects: do the gentlemen propose to kill the beasts, or to wrestle with them? Hence, without taking this precaution, he places himself, almost smothered in snow, beside a tree, with a double-barrel gun in his hands and another within reach, leaning against a tree. The performance begins—a confused noise of voices and rattling sticks is heard in the distance. Then the sound of cracking dry boughs and shaken shrubs approaches and an enormous animal emerges from the forest, headed full speed for Tolstoy. Tolstoy fires one shot, and misses. The second shot he fires almost at point-blank range and hits, but the maddened animal continues its forward dash. To jump aside in the snow is impossible; he reaches out for the spare gun, but at this moment, the bear knocks him off his feet and hurls all its weight upon him. Lying on the back, Tolstoy struggles desperately, trying to draw his head as deep into his shoulders as possible; yet, a few moments later, part of his head, from the top of the forehead to the cheek-bone, is in the enormous, warm, growling mouth, and the steel-like fangs sink deeper and deeper into his flesh, inflicting acute pain.

At this moment, a peasant hunter, who is the only one to have observed the scene, runs up to the bear from behind and, shaking his stick, howls at the top of his voice: "Get up, you fool! Get up!" The bear takes this false alarm in earnest and, frightened, abashedly runs away, leaving Tolstoy's skull still uncracked. When Tolstoy rises to his feet "the snow is as thickly drenched with blood as though a lamb were slain."

As though nourishing a grudge against literature, or, rather, against his recent literary failures, Tolstoy did not write anything for fully seven months. At moments he even thought of giving up writing for ever. But to stem the insistent fountain of creative energy proved to be as difficult as it was to stem the "sinful" passions. He did not "put anything on paper"; yet (as he wrote to Foeth), between his agricultural pursuits and hunting, "between wheat and manure," he "could not help devising plans." He comes to Moscow to spend the rest of the winter, and it is here that he definitely yields to the temptation. For three months, he works from morning till evening, and in March 1859, the new novel, "Family Happiness," is completed. Esthetically speaking, it is an achievement perhaps superior to anything he has written before; biographically speaking, it is the literary child of that romance which two years before he had experienced with Valeria Arsenyev.

It is written in the form of a young woman's autobiography. Marie, for such is this woman's name, tells us how Serge Mikhailovich, *her guardian*, begins to visit her and her sister, the two *orphan girls* living with their *governess*, how, on the *veranda* of their country house, overgrown with *lilac bushes*, the first germ of the mutual attraction is born; how he, a man dreaming of "quiet family happiness," is apparently *afraid* of her young age and *possible light-mindedness*. It is not only that the italicized details exactly coincide with the stage-setting of that little love-drama which was enacted in Sudakovo; Marie herself unmistakably resembles Valeria, and Serge Mikhailovich, with his "brutish features," ideas and straight-forward manners, is very much like Tolstoy. Yet, from a certain point, the novel takes a different course from the actual episode, for Serge Mikhailovich marries Marie. The first months of passion and happiness are described; then, the first symptoms of fatigue and boredom that supersede them; the coquettish thirst to sparkle in society that awakens in Marie and drives her husband to fits of jealousy; a new, purely carnal and illegitimate romance on the brink of which she is standing; and, finally, her reconciliation with the husband over the cradle of their baby, with the prosaic, unenthusiastic family happiness—yes, perhaps it is happiness—that

ensues. Starting from his own autobiographical, individual case, Tolstoy gave a painting of the full cycle of man's relations with woman in marriage; and he did it with such psychological depth and concentrated power that "Family Happiness" may justly be said to be a unique work of its kind.

His grip on his subjects has become firmer, his constructive skill greater. Moreover, it is in this novel that a peculiarity of his talent, which had made itself felt long before, becomes especially apparent. Whatever he speaks about, whether it be a human being, a dog or a lilac bush, he does not describe it; he seems to reincarnate himself into this human being, dog or bush, to sense it from within and to tell what he senses with that degree of conviction which can be derived only from personal experience. No garden lives more intensely in any literature than the garden of Marie's estate. As Turgenev will put it later, his sentences "smell of life." What is especially remarkable is that, in "Family Happiness," the ultra-masculine Tolstoy has reincarnated himself into a woman: the whole book is permeated with such intense young femininity that one actually apprehends the girl's soul in the girl's body. And he seems to have done so without the slightest effort: when it comes to flesh, instinct and blind feeling, he is a master, knowing everything, who can say no word that will ring false.

With the unmistakable flair of a good editor, Nekrassov feels that "Family Happiness" is "the thing," and he offers Tolstoy "any financial terms" for the right of publishing it in *The Contemporary*. But Tolstoy declines the offer and sells his novel to *The Russian Messenger*, a review published by Katkov, who is now a moderate liberal and who will later become the famous Russian advocate of conservatism. Nekrassov takes this as an offense. It amounts to a rupture with *The Contemporary*, which had introduced Tolstoy, as a writer, into the world.

The fact is that, during these two years, the situation in Russia's journalistic world has changed. The liberal policy of *The Contemporary*, which we have seen in its inception, is turning more and more toward intolerant radicalism. Its critics are deriding, with an ever-growing violence, the principle of "art for art's sake"; they peremptorily demand from novelists "social" novels which might serve as text-books for their radical preachings. Poetry, unless it is "civic" poetry, is sneered at; literary



TOLSTOY IN 1861. AFTER A WOODCUT BY J. LEBEDEFF (FROM
TOLSTOY'S "JOURNAL INTIME," PARIS, 1926)

standards sink lower and lower; utilitarianism becomes the slogan of the day. Simultaneously with this, the social composition of Russia's intellectual world quickly changes. The aristocracy—proletarianized or not proletarianized—quickly become outnumbered by the rising generation of self-made men, of hirsute students in high boots, of the sons of artisans and grocers—the originators of the future Russian “intelligentsia.” The first breath of the coming Nihilism and of the Socialism with which all University youths become intoxicated is in the air. And the shrewd Nekrassov is doing his best to keep pace with this rising social group. *The Contemporary* becomes its mouthpiece and rallying ground.

To Tolstoy, all this is exceedingly distasteful. “This dirty political stream wants to embrace everything and to pollute, if not entirely annihilate, all art.”

Moreover, living now in Moscow, he decides to take an active part in the struggle against these new currents of ideas. He wants to found a review of his own in which he, Foeth, the critic Botkin and Turgenev (who, in spite of all his liberalism, also begins to shrink from this new spirit) would be the chief writers and the leading spirits. “This review will have only one purpose—pure artistic delight. It will exist to make people weep and laugh.” For some time, he works with great energy on this idea, negotiates, formulates programs and endeavors to raise funds for the enterprise. Then he somehow forgets all about it.

VIII

A year and a half have passed. In the summer of 1860, it becomes evident that Count Nicholas Nicholayevich is suffering from tuberculosis and that urgent measures are needed to save his life. He has long since been coughing and spitting blood, but, with his usual self-effacing modesty, has mentioned his misfortune to no one. Now, however, he has grown so pale and weak that the family is alarmed, and his friends as well. Turgenev, who hears of it during his stay in France, writes to Foeth: “Is it possible that this invaluable man should die? Shall not he be able even now to conquer his laziness and go abroad for a cure? . . . Please, for my sake, fall on your knees before him, and then rise and kick him out of Russia!” Finally, at the end of June, Count Nicholas sails for Germany, and a few days later

Leo Nicholayevich follows him, not wishing to leave his brother alone in such a condition.

The change of climate seems to help Count Nicholas: he visibly improves. Reassured, Tolstoy continues his travels alone in Germany. But a month later, when the brothers meet in Kissingen, he is horrified. Count Nicholas is a living corpse. "No hope! What is most horrible is that he understands it all. And what a desire to live! But no energy for life is left." He takes his brother to Hyères, a *kurort* for consumptives in France, on the Mediterranean coast. There he passes a month of indescribable anguish. Nicholas conceals his sufferings; he jests constantly, and pretends not to know that he is dying. Only at times, losing his self-control for a moment, he whispers: "For a month—these attacks of coughing I have before each dawn . . . And Lord! These nightmares . . . It is dreadful!" This silent suffering wrenches Tolstoy's heart more than would any groans. He sees how with every day the little reserve of life that is still left to the sufferer leaks out, drop after drop; he sees it, and feels his utter powerlessness to help. Finally, on October 2, the last agony is over. Once more, the old superstition has come true: no man named Nicholas has ever long survived in the Tolstoy family.

It is interesting to note this: Five years ago, on Tolstoy's return from Sebastopol, his brother Dimitry had likewise died of consumption. This death had occurred under circumstances more dramatic than that of Nicholas. Tolstoy was merely summoned one day from Petersburg to the city of Oryol. The sight which he saw upon entering his brother's room was truly tragical—"an enormous wrist attached to the two wrist-bones, and the very same beautiful eyes he had so often seen before, but now with the horror of death in them . . ." Tolstoy looked at it, and galloped back to Petersburg: he did not want to miss the amateur performance at the Court, to which he had been invited.

If, however, he took Dimitry's death so easily, Nicholas's death now is for him such a tragedy as he himself hardly expected. Why such a striking difference in reactions? Because, although he adores all of his brothers, Nicholas was dearer to him than Dimitry? This is hardly a sufficient explanation. But the fact remains that he is plunged into indescribable horror,—both spontaneously emotional and philosophic. His letters to Mlle. Yergolsky, Count Serge, Foeth and others are all filled with it:

“ . . . Thousands of times I have said to myself: ‘Let the dead bury the dead’ . . . But one cannot persuade a stone to fall upwards, and not down. One cannot laugh at a jest of which one is sick and tired . . . What is the purpose of all that we are doing, if to-morrow the pangs of death will begin with all their misery, and all our lies, dirt and self-deceit are destined to end in nothingness, in extinction? . . . The only truth that I have learned in the thirty-two years of my life is that the situation into which some supreme being has placed us is the vilest deceit and evil that can be devised; should a man place another man into such position, we would find no words to describe the crime. To praise Allah, God, Brahma! Oh, miserable benefactors! . . .”

Weeks pass. He tries to compel himself to work, but he cannot. “It is impossible. My work has lost for me that meaning which it formerly had . . . The question: To what avail? comes to me incessantly. I, too, shall soon start out upon my way *there*. Where? Nowhere!”

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW CHAPTER BEGUN

I

It is the beginning of June 1861. As Tolstoy's carriage stops on the driveway in front of the large mansion at Spasskoye, Turgenev runs down the steps of the balcony to meet his guest. They embrace.

Tolstoy had returned, a month before, from the West, where he had tarried for half a year after Count Nicholas's death. None of the friends of the Tolstoy family deplored this death more sincerely than Turgenev. Now, receiving Leo Nicholayevich at Spasskoye, he is more tender and affectionate toward him than ever, for a new bond of mutual grief unites them. His first impression is that the loss his guest has suffered "has left him serene, meditative and peaceful."

Turgenev has just completed "Fathers and Children," a novel which he justly regards as his masterpiece. To his unbounded pleasure, Tolstoy questions him about it with friendly sympathy and, finally, expresses a desire to read it. After dinner, he retires with the manuscript to a drawing room, where a sofa is prepared for him. Turgenev arranges the pillows for him, draws up the smoking-stand, and leaves the room.

Before he had come to know his great contemporary personally, Tolstoy held Turgenev's writings in high esteem. However, after they had met and found themselves at odds with one another, he transferred his irritation from the man to the man's work. He became decidedly unfair in his judgments. Disregarding the artistic perfection of Turgenev's novels, he began to see in them only "poses" (of which they certainly contain no trace), "false effects" (of which they are absolutely free) and "hypocritical pretenses." Now, lying on the sofa and fully realizing with what keen anxiety Turgenev awaits his verdict, he desires to be kind and honest. Yet, while he is still reading the very first pages, the old irritation begins to assert itself. More-

over, Turgenev's handwriting is not very clear; the dinner had been both plentiful and savory—Turgenev prides himself upon the excellence of his chef; the characters begin to blur before Tolstoy's eyes, and finally, "Fathers and Children" finds its proper rôle by dropping on his face and obligingly protecting it from the light. He dozes off. An hour later, he wakes up with a start and, opening his eyes, sees the back of Turgenev, who is walking away quickly on tip-toes. So Turgenev has seen how soporific is the effect of his novel! Tolstoy at once realizes what a disastrous weakness he has indulged and curses his pleasant little nap, but it is too late. The morning's harmony is gone, and the rest of the day is ruined. Both dissemble the strained uneasiness they feel behind an appearance of politeness, carefully avoiding all mention of "Fathers and Children."

In the morning, both set out for Foeth's house at Stepanovka. As they are traveling side by side in the carriage across the fields, Turgenev's grudge against Tolstoy quickly evaporates. He looks at Tolstoy with his usual feeling of half envious, half delighted inner amusement. "A Troglodyte"—beyond doubt, but what a charming Troglodyte! With what greed he absorbs with his eyes a passing peasant, a willow-tree, everything! "Within his skull, wolf-hounds are constantly racing at break-neck speed." How should he be angry with him? While driving, they talk. He recently wrote to Tolstoy: "I realize that it is I who must envy you—not you who should envy me. You still live in the future; I am already almost in the past." Indeed, in these years Turgenev has altered much. Threads of silver run through the mane adorning his head; the increasing number of wrinkles are pedantically marking up his advancing years; his seemingly vigorous body has already begun "to shelter with remarkable hospitality all the ailments that please to visit it," and days and even weeks of dark, dyspeptic prostration torture him more and more frequently. Perhaps it is for this reason that now, more than ever before, it is for him an almost physical pleasure to be beside Tolstoy and to be cheered by Tolstoy's ever-youthful strength, as fertile and inexhaustible as the soil.

II

The next morning, the Foeths and their guests gather at breakfast in the dining-room. Mme. Foeth is sitting at the samovar

between Turgenev and Tolstoy, who compete with one another in merriment. The sunny day promises to be happy for all four, when, suddenly, an altogether unexpected scene occurs.

Turgenev has an illegitimate daughter, the child of a rather unpoetic adventure of his youth with a humble seamstress. He makes no secret of this from his friends. On the contrary, he likes to be questioned about the girl, and often boasts of giving her an excellent education and of shaping her into an accomplished European young lady. Knowing that he has recently secured a new English governess for her, Mme. Foeth asks him if he is satisfied with her. Turgenev eulogizes the young woman. Among other things, he says that she requires that her pupil shall devote herself to charity. "Now," he adds, "she even makes the girl take the tattered clothes from beggars, mend them with her own hands, and restore them to their owners."

The whole affair of Turgenev's daughter has always exasperated Tolstoy. He can endure Turgenev in almost any pose, but the pose of the dutiful father he simply cannot suffer. When the conversation began, he kept silent and only frowned; but when it comes to the beggars' tattered clothes, he sallies forth into the field of battle.

TOLSTOY [*coldly*]: You believe that this mending of the beggars' rags is a good thing?

TURGENEV [*sensing the challenge*]: Of course! It brings a rapprochement between the benefactress and the poor on the problem of their actual want.

TOLSTOY: And I believe that a dressed-up young lady sitting with dirty, stinking tatters in her lap is playing an insincere and theatrical part!

TURGENEV [*raising his voice, with his nostrils distended*]: You must not say that!

TOLSTOY: Why should not I say what I think?

TURGENEV [*pale, trembling with indignation, and shouting*]: If you go on so, I shall slap your face!

This idiotic dialogue passes between the two great men with such rapidity that Mme. Foeth, caught between the belligerents, falls back in her chair almost unconscious, and Foeth himself, who had attempted to stop Turgenev, remains with his arm petrified in the air. As to Turgenev, having disgorged his invective, he takes his head in both his hands, looks with horror round the

group and rushes from the room. A moment later, he returns and comes up to Mme. Foeth: "I implore you to forgive my hideous behavior, which I deeply repent!" Then he babbles out a confused apology to Tolstoy, without daring to look at him, and rushes out again.

Realizing that the scandal can be checked only by an immediate separation of the belligerents, Foeth bids them depart. Turgenev rides to Spasskoye. Tolstoy stops at a post station half way between Foeth's village and Yassnaya. Suppressing his suffocating wrath, Tolstoy writes to Turgenev, demanding, in formally polite language, a written apology which he can show to the Foeths. Aghast at his own behavior, Turgenev is willing to do anything to atone for it, and he immediately complies with this request. The footman to whom he entrusts his letter gallops from village to village and from estate to estate, but fails to locate Tolstoy. Meanwhile, in the dingy room of the post station where he has stopped, Tolstoy is walking up and down, and, as the night advances, his anger boils with constantly increasing heat. So Turgenev will not answer? A new offense! "Scoundrell! He is too conceited to apologize as he should, and too cowardly to force a duel by refusing the apology point-blank." The morning begins to dawn; it is clear that there will be no answer, so Tolstoy writes a formal challenge. He will be waiting near the Bogoslovo forest with pistols; he does not want it to be "a banal duel, in which two writers, accompanied by other writers, meet and end by drinking each other's health in champagne." It must be a real encounter, and he requests "the honorable gentleman" to make haste.

No sooner is this challenge dispatched than Turgenev's letter is brought in. The apology is absolute. Alas! the chance of lodging a bullet into that detestable, stately figure is lost. "I forgive you . . ." Tolstoy replies.

But this forgiveness is delivered to Turgenev simultaneously with the challenge. What shall he do? Not to answer the challenge may result in driving "the Troglodyte" to fury; to answer it—but to what purpose, since it was the result of a misunderstanding? But Turgenev is prepared even to humiliate himself. He writes:

" . . . I do not see what I could add to my first letter. Perhaps

only that I recognize your right to demand of me satisfaction with pistols. You have chosen to accept my repeated apology; your choice in the matter was free. Believe me—and this is not a phrase—that I would willingly place myself before your bullets, in order to atone for my truly insane words . . . I will add that all this is not a question of courage which I want or do not want to exhibit . . . You had the right of placing me at the barrier or of pardoning me. You have chosen what you wished to choose, and I can only submit myself to your decision . . .”

What does Tolstoy feel on the receipt of this letter? If he had maintained his dignity so far in this undignified scandal, he loses it now. The wrath accumulated during his sleepless night breaks out; instead of merely acknowledging the receipt of the second apology, he kicks the repentant enemy in a most ungentlemanly manner:

“. . . You are afraid of me! I despise you, and do not want to have anything more to do with you . . .”

Such is the end of the Tolstoy-Turgenev friendship. Of course, the incredible stupidity of this epilogue is not surprising. If one can be astonished at all it is only by the fact that it should have come on the sixth, and not on the very first year of their friendship. Why is it that the two great contemporaries could not come together without clashing? For the same reason that water cannot come in contact with red-hot iron without producing sizzling and whistling vapors. For indeed, there existed between Tolstoy and Turgenev a profound—one is tempted to say, chemical—antagonism of character; and the conflict of their ideas served only as an excuse for their differences. The fact that Tolstoy was always trying to control his unconquerable aversion to Turgenev only increased this aversion; the fact that Turgenev could never conquer his attraction to Tolstoy made him naturally emit sizzling and whistling vapors of offended *amour-propre* when he felt this aversion. If the break had not been caused by the “mending of tattered clothes,” it would have been caused by a dispute over the qualities of this or that wolf-hound, over the taste of strawberries, over anything else.

This then is the epilogue; but not the very last lines of the epilogue. Six months pass over the fatal scene. An irresistible access of Christian forgiveness overcomes Tolstoy. He rises above

his anger, fully perceiving the comicality of the quarrel; the "Troglodyte" residing in him shrinks, morally beaten. When such moods overcome Tolstoy, no false shame can deter him. He writes a tender letter to Turgenev. ". . . If I have hurt you, forgive me. It is unbearable for me to think that I have an enemy . . ."

But—strange thing! Fate itself seems to interfere, in order to frustrate all attempts at reconciliation between these two men. This time, it is that Tolstoy's letter is not delivered in time. Meanwhile, Turgenev, on his way to Paris, stops off in Petersburg and hears a rumor—absolutely false—to the effect that Tolstoy is malignantly slandering him before all their mutual friends. He believes this nonsense, explodes and, on reaching Paris, sends a challenge to Tolstoy for his "dishonorable actions."

But now Tolstoy is entrenched in his virtuous mood. To believe those vile rumors? To challenge him six months after the quarrel? Poor Turgenev! No, he certainly has no real sense of honor; he is merely slavishly afraid of that miserable thing called "public opinion." Well, Tolstoy is not. He makes a grandiloquent gesture of superiority. He writes to Turgenev:

"DEAR SIR:

"You call my actions 'dishonorable'; besides, you told me personally that you would 'slap my face.' Well, I apologize, declare myself guilty, and decline the challenge.

"COUNT L. TOLSTOY."

"You may show this letter to any one," he adds, in an accompanying note.

One can easily imagine Turgenev's despair when, after a long delay, Tolstoy's offer of peace is delivered to him. He even dares not write to Tolstoy. He writes to Foeth:

". . . This new misunderstanding leads me to the conclusion that our constellations move in the ether with a decided hostility. Therefore . . . it is better for us never to meet again. But you may write or say to him [Tolstoy]—and this without any calembours—that I deeply love him from afar, and am watching his destiny with great attention. Unfortunately, no sooner do we come together than things take an entirely different course."

This is the end. The two great Russians will not meet nor

write to one another any more. It is only after seventeen years that fate will bring them together again. Turgenev, however, will keep his promise. Tolstoy often—and not unjustly—accused him of being “unable to love any one”; yet we shall see with what touching sympathy he will watch “from afar,” during these seventeen years, Tolstoy’s every step and action. Tolstoy’s “literary midwife” will never lose interest in the child he “saw into the world . . .”

III

Since his return to Russia, two things particularly occupy Tolstoy’s attention: the Governmental position which he has accepted, and his pedagogical activities.

On March 3, 1861, “the great change” at last took place in Russia’s life—the Emperor signed the Emancipation Act. The actual allotment of land to the liberated peasants and supervision of the introduction of the reform were entrusted by this Act to so-called Peace Arbitrators, noblemen appointed by the Governors of the provinces. No sooner had Tolstoy returned from Europe to Yassnaya than he learned that the Governor of the province of Tula had appointed him to be the Arbitrator for the district in which Yassnaya is situated. To become the Arbitrator meant, to Tolstoy, to help the peasants. Hence, there could be no room for hesitation.

Now for his pedagogical activities. He has always been fond of children. Since his early youth, he had played for hours with the little peasant lads of Yassnaya. He had thought long since of taking their education into his hands. A year before Count Nicholas’s death, that is to say, in the fall of 1859, he carried out this idea by opening a school in an outlying building of the estate. Since the very first days, he liked his new activity immensely. Spending hours in the class-room, he felt that this was his real vocation; that he had any number of new and, as he believed, very important pedagogical discoveries in his mind, and that it was his moral duty to test them. The nine months which he had spent abroad had interrupted his work. But now, living again in Yassnaya, he returns to it zealously.

Thus, several times a week, he “arbitrates.” Riding to the estates of the Kologrivovs or Zaslons, he talks himself weary in efforts to prove to them that it would be unfair, after all, to allot to the peasants only swamp and sand lands, and listens to hundreds

of voices shouting in excited dispute over some half *dessyatina*. The rest of the time, he teaches. He is completely absorbed by these two occupations, especially by the school. All his other affairs are forsaken—his is a genuine pedagogical fever. All this year he spends in Yassnaya; even in winter, he only goes to the capitals for short visits.

Before opening his school, he read the works of all the famous pedagogues, from Pestalozzi to Froebel. Moreover, during his last trip abroad, he had visited and carefully investigated scores of German, French, and other schools. But all this preparatory work has left him absolutely dissatisfied. German schools? "Prayers for the King, teachers beating their pupils, the learning of all subjects by rote, frightened and mutilated children." French schools? They are no better. Froebelian kindergartens? "Dry doctrines, inapplicable to life." With his typical mental aggressiveness and impertinence, he discards it all as "ancient rubbish." All the educators are wrong. He alone knows where the whole truth lies.

It is now, during the year 1861, that his own pedagogical theory definitely shapes itself in his mind. This may be best described as anarchical. Its main principles are these: The school must, first of all, be "free." "Learning is man's natural want; therefore, the only right form of education is the free satisfaction of that want." Hence, no compulsion, no "police measures," are admissible: pupils must come and go when they please and study or not as they please. If, instead of studying, they prefer to trifle or sleep, they shall be at liberty to do so. The teacher has no right to question his pupils one by one, or to examine them; for "this establishes between the teacher and the pupil the relations of a superior to an inferior—a grown-up man [morally] tortures the little ones." Studies must have the character of free conversations, in which only those participate who desire to do so. It is the teacher's business to engage the children's attention; if he does not succeed in doing so, it is his own fault—either he is uninteresting, or does not know how to approach them. Thus, education is not "the deliberate molding of men according to certain patterns"; such molding would be a "criminal violence," for no one has the right to decide what patterns are good and what are bad; it is a free offering of the elements of knowledge and of basic moral



TOLSTOY AT WORK

A painting by I. Kyeprn

principles and a free absorption of them. Let the child's nature do the rest.

Such, briefly, is the educational theory which, enlarged and developed in the years to come, will create for Tolstoy the reputation of one of the world's greatest pedagogues. It is rather contradictory and rationalistically naïve, and in this rationalism, as Tolstoy will himself admit, there still are traces of Rousseau's influence. The underlying—and absolutely unproved—idea of man as a being essentially good is definitely Rousseauistic. Other elements of this theory, and especially the spirit of uncompromising extremism in the application of anarchical freedom, are certainly the fruit of Tolstoy's own mind. It is not the biographer's duty to pronounce a critical verdict on it. But it must be admitted that, no matter whether wise or merely fantastic, this theory works admirably when applied by Tolstoy himself. For how could it be otherwise?

It is eight o'clock in the morning. No one compels the children to be on time, but no compulsion is needed—they are all in the class-room long before that hour. He enters; they all rush to him, "like flies to honey"; each glance of his is caught, each jest is drowned in unanimous laughter. He opens the Bible, this "model book of all books," reads a passage from it and comments on it. There is dead silence—the barefooted lads drink in each word. His talent to make it all not only intelligible, but fascinatingly vivid for the children, is unfailing. Then—a lesson in drawing or singing. Sometimes he offers the older boys an opportunity to write a composition on some subject and, becoming one of them, sits down to write it himself. His capacity to become an equal of any other being, even of such a mysterious being as a child, is so amazing that the little fellows feel in it no pose, no false unnaturalness. Biting their tongues, sniffing and sweating, they wink at him. "Work hard, or we will beat you!" They are competing with Tolstoy . . . And with what delighted shouts do they all jump upon him when, after lessons, he runs out and challenges them: "You all against me! Can you throw me into the snow?" Indeed, he is adored. But is this adoration the consequence of his theories? Hardly. Not theories, but some indefinable grip on the instincts makes good pedagogues or good trainers of animals—and in whom is that grasp stronger and more

manly than in him? Children adore him, as dogs and horses do; all that is Nature clings to him, unconsciously discerning in him an exceptionally powerful human nature.

At first, only a dozen boys attended the school. Their parents regard it with the traditional enmity of Russian peasants towards all schools. But gradually, Tolstoy succeeded in conquering this enmity, and towards the beginning of 1862 the number of his pupils increases to forty. He can no longer do the work single-handed, and in Moscow he picks out three or four young University students who become his colleagues. This conforms with the customs of the time, when "to teach a peasant" becomes the chief slogan of advanced Russian society. Carried away by the great reform, the Russian public grows more and more romantically populist. A score of schools are opened in the neighborhood of Yassnaya, and their teachers all fall under Tolstoy's influence and adopt his system. Veritable little pedagogical congresses convene from time to time in Yassnaya.

Encouraged by these successes, Tolstoy decides to publish a pedagogical monthly. He entitles it *Yassnaya Polyana*, and the first issue of it appears at the beginning of 1862. He is himself the chief editor and its principal contributor. He expounds in its pages his pedagogical theory with a great enthusiasm and from all conceivable points of view. He has started this enterprise at his own expense, hoping that he would be able to secure a sufficient number of subscribers in the capitals. Meanwhile, it consumes a good deal of his money, as also does the school, in which the tuition is, of course, free. But what does he care! When he finds a new hobby, he mistakes it for that "moral practical activity" which he has been seeking all his life, and he is ready to sacrifice not only all of his money, but all of himself as well.

IV

Tolstoy's articles in *Yassnaya Polyana* are not confined to pedagogy only. They often deviate into art, culture and other fields of general interest. And these deviations are significant.

During the painful months after Count Nicholas's death, and especially during the year spent in mental solitude among the peasants, Tolstoy has been thinking and concentrating intensively. This concentration has borne its fruit. Tolstoy feels that he has at last worked out a real philosophy of his own. He burns

with a desire to express it as fully as possible. And *Yassnaya Polyana* naturally becomes his mouthpiece.

What is this new philosophy of his? Its principles are indeed remarkable. The Russian peasant, the uncultured man "laboring in manure," is the ideal man; he is everything. We, "the perverted men of the upper classes," are nothing. Why is this so? The absurd arithmetical answer follows: "It is as clear as daylight: of us, there are but thousands; of them, there are millions! . . . The people can exist without the educated classes, while the educated classes cannot exist without the people!" From these premises, truly "troglydytish" conclusions are drawn. First of all, the results of culture are set aside. This is no longer one of the passing, occasional remonstrances against culture with which we are familiar. Now it is a deliberate, carefully thought-out and disdainful attempt to drown it in the "manure" of a peasant's cattle-yard. Only what is useful to the peasant is good and "natural"; the so-called "finer things" are merely "hypocritical perversity and abominations." Consider the arts. ". . . Venus of Milos can evoke in the people only disgust before nakedness, before the imprudence of debauchery. Beethoven's quartettes . . . will strike them merely as unpleasant noise, and may amuse them only because one plays a large violin and another plays a small one. The best specimens of our poetry, such as the lyrical verses of Pushkin, will appear to them as just so many words treating of nonsense . . . [This proves that] Pushkin's and Beethoven's works appeal to us, not because there is absolute beauty in them, but because we are perverted in the same way as were Pushkin and Beethoven, because they excite our feebleness and depraved sensitiveness." If so, art as it exists is "falsehood, costly extravagance." What then, is real art? A simple folk-song; ten kopecks' worth of "oleography of the Devil in the pitcher" which the peasant nails on the wall of his cabin. Having thus buried art, Tolstoy passes on to other things. Science? He speaks of it with the high-handed aggressiveness of a hopeless ignoramus; with that very aggressiveness which he displayed at the age of sixteen, when failing to pass his examination. Things taught by professors are "useless trifles"; "universities turn out not such men as people need, but such as are required by our perverted society." Governmental institutions? They are but a "silly superstition" which serves as an "instrument for the exploitation

of the masses." In a word, let all the world be brought down to the stinking level of the peasant; let all look with subservient admiration at the "oleography of the Devil in the pitcher," and then mankind will become moral. Tolstoy's nihilism is complete; religion is the only thing which he, so far, leaves untouched. Cleansed by his moralistic zeal, the universe emerges robbed of everything, impoverished to a state of hopeless misery.

How could an artist as great as Tolstoy produce an abracadabra as impotently vehement as this? However astonishing it may be, he earnestly believes all he says. What is especially remarkable is that he is an exceptionally severe critic of his own works of fiction; after having written a masterpiece, he often sincerely believes that it is "trash," and he never feels hurt if his friends criticize it adversely—on the contrary, he appreciates this. But he is absolutely devoid of the capacity of looking critically at his philosophical ideas. Now—as before—whenever his mind hits on a thought, he lights up with passion and is cock-sure that it is an eternal truth. And here he becomes extremely intolerant of the criticism of others. When some one tries to discuss the value of this new philosophy of his, he does not even listen; he merely shakes his head with impatient irritation and blurts out, angrily: "But what do I care? I have arrived at it logically, and consequently it is true." When his creative instinct conceives imaginary worlds of fiction, he is omnipotent, God-like; but when he tries to reason, to manipulate abstractions, he reminds one of a cave-man, of an elephant promenading in a miniature Japanese garden. A strange combination? No doubt. But without it Tolstoy would not be Tolstoy.

Both the pedagogical and the philosophic articles printed in *Yassnaya Polyana* meet with a storm of derision and abuse in Petersburg and Moscow. From conservatives to radicals, all unite in poking fun at its editor and author. "A School *à la* Tolstoy would be a noisy marketplace or a *tabor* [camp] of gipsies, and not a school" . . . "Fancies of a half-learned and wayward Russian squire" . . . Chernyshevsky, the famous radical critic of *The Contemporary*, goes even further than that: "Go to the University," he advises Tolstoy: "you will learn a great deal there . . . unless your mind is completely deprived of the capacity of acquiring knowledge." Turgenev alone pities instead of deriding. He still worships Tolstoy's artistic talent as disinterestedly as

he had worshiped it before. But of Tolstoy's philosophic writings he, later, will say: "Of course, *chacun a sa façon de tuer ses puces*. But what a sad thing it is that this man should stray into philosophy! And isn't it remarkable that he no sooner begins to philosophize than even his style becomes like an inextricable swamp . . . I cannot even read it."

Derision wounds deeply; yet, far from being deterred from his philosophic discoveries, Tolstoy clings to them all the more passionately. Moreover, now, at thirty-three, he is as willing to translate his convictions into immediate action as he was at twelve, leaping out of the second-floor window. Art is a "falsehood"? Very well. He will give up "beautiful lies" forever—he will write no more fiction: this is a firm decision. Majestic indeed is the barbarian ease with which Tolstoy is ready to throw to the dogs that which is the greatest in him—his artistic genius. But he goes even further. If the peasant is the model human being, what moral right has he, Tolstoy, to rise above the peasant's level, to be a squire? Once, during a walk with his barefooted friends, the schoolboys, he astonishes them: "I'll tell you what I am going to do. I'll give up my estate, buy myself a peasant lot and cabin, marry a peasant girl and live among you. What do you think about it?" He means it; his conscience tortures him, and in order to be true to his philosophy he thinks of driving himself into the cattle-yard for the rest of his life, metaphorically speaking—of ceasing to wash, both mentally and physically. He has at the time a protracted liaison with a peasant woman of which we know almost nothing, but which seems to have been serious. This, apparently, is yet another influence thrusting him towards the peasant state. To till the land . . . Not the way he so far has done it, not as an amusement, but in earnest . . . Deeply perturbed, he stands on the threshold of this decision. Indeed, this is a critical moment in his life. One more impulse, one more chance pushing him in this direction, and—who knows?—we might see him cobble shoes and obstinately, ascetically murder all joy in life right now, in his thirties. But Fate wills this fatal step to be postponed for a great many years.

V

Peace-arbitration, the school, the review, the strain of this new torturing idea—all this has exhausted Tolstoy, and a severe attack

of neurasthenia seizes him. Simultaneously with this he contracts a cough, and his imagination transforms it into consumption: is it possible that, after Dimitry and Nicholas, it should be his turn? Frightened, he rides to the province of Samara in Eastern Russia, to a settlement of the Bashkirs, a nomadic tribe: *Koumyss*, the mare's fermented milk, which they drink, is regarded in Russia as one of the best remedies against consumption, and the wild Bashkir steppes have the reputation of being the best *kurort* for the consumptive. Tolstoy's consumption is, of course, imaginary. But the nomadic life in a tent, the contact with these picturesque Asiatics, the endless uninhabited stretches covered with the silvery, undulating feather-grass, cure his nerves. While he rests, an unexpected thing happens in Yassnaya.

Among the students whom Tolstoy invited to teach in his school there was one who had previously participated in some forbidden political activities. This was noticed by the authorities, and the Chief of the Police of Moscow sent a secret agent to Tula to keep a secret watch over Yassnaya. Moreover, in his peace-arbitration Tolstoy was decidedly for the peasant and against the landlord, which drove the nobility of the province of Tula to fury; many complaints against him were sent to Petersburg. Finally, during his last trip abroad, he had become very intimate, in London, with A. Herten, a famous Russian radical *émigré*; this, of course, became known to the Russian police. At this time revolutionary fermentation, especially among the university youths, was quickly gaining strength, and the Ministry of Home Affairs was alarmed. The secret agent spying on Yassnaya learns of the pedagogical gatherings of neighboring teachers there and, of course, decides that it is revolution. Reports to this effect are submitted to Prince Dolgorukov, the Chief of the Corps of Gendarmes, and he orders a search to be conducted in Yassnaya. Hence, on a June day, scores of police-officers, gendarmes, policemen, witnesses, etc., drive into the estate, invade all the buildings, frighten Mlle. Yergolsky and Countess Marie Nicholayevna into hysterics and search the whole house. Nothing "revolutionary" is discovered; yet, departing, the police officials do not even bother to proffer an apology to the frightened ladies.

On his way back from the Bashkir steppes Tolstoy stops in Moscow, learns of the event, and his indignation is indescribable. To treat him, Count Tolstoy, like some wretched, long-haired

Nihilist! But he is grieved and angered even more when he reaches Yassnaya. Knowing the peasants, he realizes immediately how this search has compromised him in their eyes. They simply do not understand that it has been caused by absurd political suspicions. A search? Well, the *barin* must be something like "a criminal, a counterfeiter who missed the fetters by a hair's breadth." What henceforth will be his position in the school? "All my activity in which I have found joy and peace of mind is wrecked."

He writes a complaint to the Emperor requesting him "to denounce, if not punish, the culprits," and he sends it to Countess Alexandra. He asks her to find a way of remitting it to His Majesty; yet, his wrath is such that, while seeking her assistance, he thunders even against her, the innocent "high patroness of his soul":

". . . So that's the kind of friends you have! For all these . . . Dolgorukovs, Arakcheyevs, prison governors, etc., *are* your friends! One of them, some dirty colonel, read my private letters and diaries . . . and two correspondences for the privacy of which I would have given all I possess! Charming! So that's how the Government recruits friends! . . . How is it that you, wonderful person that you are, can live in that Petersburg? Or is it that your eyes have covered with film, and you don't see the truth? I often tell myself that it's a good thing I wasn't here,—otherwise I should doubtless be a murderer." But who knows? Perhaps he still will be a murderer: the gendarmes declared that they might come for a second search; hence, "I keep loaded pistols in my room, awaiting the *dénouement* any minute . . . I am writing all this in cold blood and pre-meditatedly: please, show it to Dolgorukov and all other bandits who . . . compromise the Emperor in the opinion of his subjects . . ."

VI

Still filled with anger, he goes back to Moscow. He even thinks of selling his estates and going abroad for good: "Impossible to live in Russia." Soon, however, there arises before him a new situation which makes him forget all—his school, his new ideas and even the offense he has sustained.

Among his Moscow friends there is the family of one Dr. Andrew Behrs, the Court physician to Emperor Alexander II.

Mme. Behrs, a majestic brunette of thirty-five, was a playmate of Tolstoy's teens: she is *née* Islenyev, the daughter of those very Islenyevs who were intimate friends of Leo Nicholayevich's father and whom Leo Nicholayevich described in "Childhood" under the name of Irtenyevs—the parents. Six years before, on his return from Sebastopol, he found her not only married, but also a mother of three daughters and five sons. His old friendship with her was immediately renewed; he came to like her intelligent, simple, hospitable husband, and he henceforth seldom stopped in Moscow without visiting their apartment in the Kremlin Palace. The Behrs are spending this summer in a country-villa at Pokrovskoye, near the capital; to dispel his angry mood Tolstoy often goes to see them; they receive him with such affection and warmth that he feels better among them than anywhere else.

What attracts him to Pokrovskoye chiefly, however, is the Behrs' daughters. Two of them, Sophie and Elisabeth, are charming girls of eighteen and nineteen; Tatyana, the third, is just reaching womanhood. A year and a half before he was interested for a while in the serious, intelligent, well-balanced Elisabeth; he even told his sister: "Should I ever marry, it would be one of the Behrs girls"; Countess Marie was delighted and assured him that "Elisabeth would make an excellent wife." The attention he showed to Elisabeth was noticed by her and by the whole Behrs family. But this was only a passing moment. No, he was decidedly too old for her, and he gave up the thought. Now, visiting Pokrovskoye, he has no matrimonial thoughts in mind. He merely finds delight in being in the atmosphere of this bright, happy young womanhood, in beholding with that eye which unfailingly feels and understands all instinct these three girls with their innocent little secrets, with their youthful merriment, with potential flirtation in their eyes. When he returned from Sebastopol and saw them first they were all children; he told them fairy tales, sported with them, put the little Tatyana on his shoulders and thus galloped with her; and now, they are marriageable young ladies; and he, he is thirty-four; "How old am I, indeed!" Matrimonial ideas? Nonsense!

But in spite of these self-assurances, and in spite of the sad thoughts that the Government search stirred up in him, he is such a tireless organizer of parties and picnics, such an inexhaustible

inventor of all sorts of games in the garden, and such sunshine radiates from his powerful figure that the whole family awaits his visits with impatience. He suits all ages and all agree that he is "not like others," that "he can understand everything and that everything can be said to him." From the gray-haired Dr. Behrs to his ten-year-old sons, and even to the servants—all jump up and rush to meet "*le comte*" as soon as his horses' bells are heard on the driveway.

His too-frequent visits, during which he is most of the time with the girls, cannot fail, however, to seem suggestive to Mme. Behrs. Last winter Countess Marie Nicholayevna, who was very intimate with her, told her of Tolstoy's words on Elisabeth. That and now these visits; is it possible that the friend of her childhood will become her son-in-law? Why not? It would be an unexpectedly brilliant match for Elisabeth. Back-door gossip is exceptionally active in Russia, whether it is through governesses, servants or any other such channel. All friends in common sniff something matrimonial in the air; and soon the rumor spreads in Moscow that Count Tolstoy is about to become Elisabeth Behrs' fiancé.

Tolstoy learns it and feels uneasy. First of all, he obstinately keeps telling himself that he is "too old"; that it is all impossible, out of the question. Besides, he is getting more and more interested in Sophie, the second daughter, not in Elisabeth. Slender, graceful, with large, beautiful eyes, she is all charged with that quintessence of femininity which the Germans call "*das ewig Weibliche*," which the French describe as "*du chien*" and to which Tolstoy is especially sensitive. He admires everything in her. Like all the Behrs girls, she is excellently bred in the conservative sense of the word; unlike some of the "modern" girls spoiled by liberal influences coming from Europe, she will never give her hand to a man: she makes deep, old-fashioned "curtsies," and Tolstoy likes that; but this does not prevent her from being unaffectedly simple. Her intelligent, slightly astonished eyes absorb all they see with a greed which displays a vivid, energetic mind. With his unmistakable flair, in spite of her innocence and reserve, he feels deep passions and a strong temperament in her. And his curiosity for her, that curiosity which is perhaps the beginning of any romance, grows every day. Once, during a walk, she tells him that she has written a novel; this is as unex-

pected to him as it is mystifying. He asks her to show it to him; blushing, as though frightened, she refuses; he feels touched and, he himself does not know why, still more interested. No, this blossoming youth with all its emotions is not for him; but driving away from Pokrovskoye he is strangely happy. The Emperor's *aide-de-camp* calls on him one of these days and proffers him His Majesty's apology for that search—Countess Alexandra has been working for him in Petersburg; but that leaves him cold. All this has now become strangely remote and uninteresting; his thoughts are in Pokrovskoye.

The Behrs family goes on a visit to Islenyev, to Mme. Behrs' father, whose estate is not far from Yassnaya; Tolstoy also arrives there. At night scores of guests gather in the spacious house; there are music, dances, all sorts of amusements—the merry old hero of "Childhood" likes to entertain in a lavish, old-fashioned way. Tolstoy cannot tear his eyes off Sophie; the poetic reminiscences connected with this estate, which he visited so often with his father and where every stone reminds him of his childhood, add fuel to the flames of the emotion which he still refuses to identify as love. Sophie, with flushed cheeks, in a crinoline dress with flying ribbons, is all excitement. As he sees her dancing with others—he himself dances no longer—intermittent waves of happiness, and anguish, and envy pervade him. They remain for a moment alone in a drawing-room where a table is set for whist; they talk of insignificant things, but he feels that an electric current of high nervous tension and—expectation?—understanding?—runs between them. Here a scene takes place which the great artist will reproduce years later in "Anna Karenina" with an almost verbatim accuracy. "Sophie Andreyevna, can you read the sentence which I will write to you in initials?"—and, taking a piece of chalk, he scribbles on the green cloth a long row of unintelligible letters: "Y. y. a. t . . ." etc. As though vibrating with an unexplainable inspiration she deciphers almost immediately, helped by him only in one or two places: "Your youth and thirst for happiness remind me too keenly of my old age and of the impossibility of happiness for me." With still deeper emotion on his expressive face, he writes again; and again she deciphers, it might seem, the undecipherable: "A wrong idea exists in your family as to me and your sister Elisabeth . . ."

But Tolstoy, the unmistakable reader of all feelings, is blind,

as only a man falling in love can be. Even now, after this scene, he does not see that the girl has long since been in love with him.

VII

He has been Sophie's hero since her childhood. If there are first sight infatuations, hers was certainly such.

When she was eleven her mother gave her "Childhood" to read. In spite of her liveliness and merriment, there was in the girl a deeper undercurrent that no one suspected. The book impressed her so that she learned entire pages of it by heart. Or, rather, not the book, but its author, for she felt him, dreamed about him. A year later there came a day which she did not forget to the last minute of her life: she saw Tolstoy for the first time. Merry and animated, in his impeccable military jacket, he was sitting in her mother's drawing-room and telling the grown-ups of Sebastopol, from which he had just returned. The girl memorized every word he said; and when he left she covertly tied red ribbons to the chairs on which he had sat.

A few years passed, during which he seldom appeared in their house. She became a young lady. One Polivanov, a military cadet of good family, began to sigh loudly in her presence, to write verses in her album, to choose her as his partner in dances and games. She was at that age when such things impress and excite. He proposed to her; she accepted, and they decided—secretly—that, when he should have completed his education, they would marry. Did she forget Tolstoy? Who knows? Perhaps, for the time being—yes. But, anyway, Tolstoy was for her a dream too great to come true: she and he—she hardly ever had juxtaposed these two pronouns with any thought or hope of the possibility of their juxtaposition.

But then, on his way to the Bashkir steppes, Tolstoy visited them several times in Moscow. He coughed, and was pale and sad. Her childish attraction to him was fully revived, but now in a fully developed, womanly form. The thought that he was ill did not leave her. That night she prayed especially long. Looking at her, her younger sister asked:

"Sophie, *tu aime le comte?*"

The girl, apparently not astonished by the question, whispered: "*Je ne sais pas,*" and added: "Oh, Tanya, you know that two of his brothers died of consumption!"



SOPHIE BEHRS. AFTER A WOODCUT BY J. LEBEDEFF (FROM
TOLSTOY'S "JOURNAL INTIME," PARIS, 1926)

All night long she cried and whispered something, trying not to awaken her sisters. Would she remain true to the promise she gave to Polivanov, should Tolstoy pay court to her? Of course, at that time he did not court her—he was merely going to the Bashkir steppes. Yet the very thought upset her inner peace. Each letter her mother received from him with the description of the nomadic life he was living, with the promise of bringing them a bunch of the unfading feather-grass, etc., made her heart palpitate. After he returned and began to visit them, she set out to write a novel, that very novel which, later, she refused to show him. In that novel she tested that situation which—she feared and hoped at the same time—might develop. It has not survived, but we know its contents. Helen, the heroine, is courted by one Smirnov, a good and worthy, but insignificant man. The house of Helen's parents is often visited by Prince Dublitzky, a "genius" with an "ugly face," an extraordinary personality and a "constantly changing attitude towards life." He begins to show a growing interest for Helen. At odds with herself, Helen suffers: the prince attracts her, but she feels all the danger of uniting her fate to the fate of that man who is always seeking something, always spiritually rushing after the unattainable. Finally, Smirnov's despair decides her: to save herself from the temptation she arranges Dublitzky's marriage with her elder, cold and well-balanced sister. This is, however, more than she can stand: she is on the point of confining herself in a convent. But years pass; the tragedy is over; she marries Smirnov, who "loves simply, faithfully and safely, without demanding anything."

This was, of course, merely imagination. But how this imagination began to resemble actual life! Was it possible that she had foretold the truth? She felt but too well that the grown-ups were mistaken—it was not for Elisabeth's sake that he was coming. For whose, then? She dared not tell herself. But to-night, after this "conversation in initials," how can she refrain from uttering the answer? "Your youth and thirst for happiness remind me too keenly of my old age, etc. . . ."—is this not a veiled, unconfessed confession? She still fears to believe, but her whole being wants to believe; and, believing, she still fears to be mistaken. Will she be able to keep the promise given to Polivanov, as Helen, her heroine, kept her promise to Smirnov?

It is the beginning of September. Tolstoy is again in Moscow, and again he rides almost daily to visit the Behrs, who are back in Pokrovskoye. Even with all his obstinate reluctance to see facts he cannot help admitting to himself that he, "the old fool," is in love with "this child," and that this is a violent, devastating love against which his powerful frame is impotent to struggle. On making this discovery he wanted to go abroad with the Countess Marie, but gave up the idea. He wanted to tear himself away from Moscow in some other way, but gave up the attempt. What a striking difference! During his romance with Valeria he discriminated, hesitated, asked himself what kind of a wife she would be; but now—now he is unable not alone to discriminate, but even to think, to reason. Shaken with passion as with fever, like a gambler who has lost a great deal and, unable to stop, stakes further and further, he keeps going there and, with every day, lets himself be drawn in deeper and deeper. "As a school-boy awaits Sundays, so I await the evenings . . ." What adds to his misfortunes is that his position in the Behrs house has become extremely uneasy: the Behrs parents are still sure that he wants Elisabeth, and this makes him "almost hate Elisabeth, pitying her at the same time"; moreover, the doctor apparently believes that it is scandalous to come every day for two months and not to propose; he has adopted a coldly official tone with Tolstoy—"He looks at me as though I had stolen something." "Idiotic situation . . . I must cut the knot or quit." What, it might seem, can be simpler? But no, not for Tolstoy—that Sophie could love him, too, he does not admit for a moment.

Perhaps with the secret idea of encouraging him—Sophie is no less vexed than he by the strained uncertainty—she lets him, at last, read her novel. But the effect it makes on him is as typical as it is unexpected: when he reads that Prince Dublitzky had "constantly changing ideas" he recognizes himself; but when he learns that this gentleman "had a very ill-favored exterior," he is "hit right in the eye," literally scorched. Failing to perceive Helen's attraction to the ugly hero, he feels only that, in her eyes, he *is* ugly, and the idea of "such a broad nose and such thick lips" which tormented him in his youth is immediately resuscitated with all its paralyzing overtones, with the complete lack of assur-

ance, with tragi-comical neurasthenic sufferings. "You, disgusting snout, don't dream of marriage . . . Dublitzky, do not poke your nose where there are poetry, youth, beauty, love . . . hard work, . . . the spiritual monastery is the only thing that remains for you . . ."

But this consciousness of ugliness only excites his love further and further. "That one could love so foolishly I would never have believed. I am a madman. If it goes on like this, I will shoot myself. They gave a *soirée*. She was charming in everything. And I—the hideous Dublitzky! But I cannot stop—I had to take my precautions before . . ." Yet, in spite of all, hope persists. "The hideous Dublitzky? . . . All right, but I am beautiful in my love." . . . Besides, "she blushes, all emotion . . ." And he decides to propose to her. But his timidity and bashfulness reach such a point that every day he goes there with the firm resolution to propose, but, dripping with cold sweat and paralyzed by the horror of refusal, he fails to do it. He is unable to speak? He will write. And he spends sleepless nights writing, tearing and re-writing letters with the avowal of love to be handed to her; but, no matter how he curses himself for it, these letters remain, day after day, in his pocket, and, utterly wretched, he notes at night again: "Didn't do it . . . To-morrow, as soon as I get up, will go and do it or shoot myself." If she refuses, he won't get over it. If she accepts—but no: "Happiness, and such happiness, at that, is impossible. Lord, help me! . . . Holy Virgin, save me! . . ." Thus, rushing from despair to hope and from hope to despair, trembling mentally before the refusal of the girl who dreams only of becoming his and hating himself for his weakness, he spends long days in inexpressible anguish and torture, before which even the comicality of its self-infliction pales.

September 28.—Tolstoy, who arrived at the Kremlin early in the afternoon—for the Behrs are back in their winter residence—looks pale and uncommonly nervous. He sits at the piano with Sophie, asking her to play something *à quatre mains* with him, jumps up without having finished, breathing heavily. Tatyana, Sophie's sister, who has an excellent contralto, begins to sing "*Il baccio*," a valse, and Tolstoy accompanies her. As his fingers slide on the keys, his emotion visibly grows. Later he confessed that this was a decisive minute for him; he has made a bet: "If she

sings the difficult concluding note well, I will immediately hand the letter to Sophie; if she fails, I won't." Tatyana's voice sounds with exceptional assurance and clearness. Getting up from the piano, with tears in his words: "How wonderfully you sing to-day!"

A minute later Sophie, pale, with something unusual in her eyes and with an envelope in her hands, flashes on the staircase leading downstairs and shuts herself up in her room. She reads:

"Sophie Andreyevna! It has all become unbearable for me. For three weeks I have been telling myself: 'To-day I will say it,' and for three weeks I have been leaving your house with the same vexation, repentance, fear and happiness in my soul. And every night, as now, I am thinking of the day that has passed, suffering and reproaching myself: 'Why did I not say!' . . . I am taking this letter with me in order to give it to you, should the courage to speak fail me again . . . Your novel is constantly in my mind because, having read it, I understood that it was foolish for me, Dublitzky, to dream of happiness . . . I thought that I would be able to look without envy at the man you would marry; that I would look at you and him with joy as one looks at children . . . But I was lying to myself . . . I cannot . . . You, the honest person you are, tell me, with your hand on your heart and without hurry—I implore you, without hurry! . . . Do you want to become my wife? Say 'Yes' only if you can say it from the depth of your soul, without the slightest reservation; say 'No' if there is even the shade of doubt in you . . . It will be horrible to hear 'No,' but I foresee it and I will find the strength to bear it. But if as a husband I am not loved as I love—it will be unbearable . . ."

Sophie's trembling eyes have hardly had the time to reach the end of these incoherent lines when Elisabeth, her face darkened with wrath, bursts into the room. "What does he write to you?"—"Il m'a fait la proposition."—Elisabeth, with sobs in her voice: "Decline, decline it immediately!" Mme. Behrs, informed of something important going on, rushes to join her daughters. A painful scene, with Elisabeth's tears, follows . . .

Meanwhile, in one of the remote rooms of the second floor, Tolstoy is standing with his hands behind his back, leaning against the white tiles of a stove, fixing some point on the wall opposite with feverish eyes. Stumbling upon him in this unaccus-

tomed place, Tatyana, the youngest, staggers back, frightened. Finally, Sophie reappears.

At night he will note: "Said it. She—yes! She—like a wounded bird! Useless to write further. It can be neither written, nor forgotten."

CHAPTER IX

“LES PEUPLES HEUREUX N’ONT PAS D’HISTOIRE”

I

A week has gone by since their marriage and departure from Moscow. Tolstoy writes to the Countess Alexandra:

“Dear friend and incomparable grandmother! I am writing to you from Yassnaya. And, as I write, I hear from the second floor the voice of my *wife*, who is talking to my brother, and whom I love more than anything in the world. I have lived to the age of thirty-four, without knowing that one can love to such an extreme and be so happy. Presently, when I am more calm, I will write you a long letter. More calm, however, is not the right word, for never have I been so calm and serene as I am now; what I mean to say is, more accustomed to all this. I still constantly have the feeling that I have stolen this happiness; that I have no right to it; that it was not destined for me, and that I do not deserve it. Here she is, coming; I hear her steps; how good it is to hear them! . . . Tell me, how is it possible that I should be loved by such a wonderful person as you and, what is still more amazing, by such a being as my wife? . . .”

“More accustomed . . . that I have stolen this happiness . . .” Remembering the ceremony in the church; the moment when, after the farewell supper at the Behrs’, the large *dormeuse* started from the Kremlin; the radiant old face of Mlle. Yergolsky, holding an ikon, and the figure of Count Serge, carrying a tray of “bread and salt” (the traditional Russian emblems of welcome), who had met them at the threshold of Yassnaya—he still shakes his head violently, bites his lips, and pinches himself; the horrible idea flashes through his mind that his happiness may yet turn out to be only a dream.

One night he is awakened. Sophie is weeping, kissing his hands: “I dreamed,” she says, “that you were dead!” The idea smites him like lightning; he becomes suddenly aware with all his being that, sooner or later, death—his death or hers—will put

an end to their happiness, and, horrified, he refuses to believe it. When the same idea strikes him on another occasion, a scene of naïve pathos follows; they both kneel and pray: "I wanted to feel that happiness is not a volatile chance, but that it is *mine*."

But this monstrous idea, unleashing its interminable array of unsolved problems, does not visit him often, and how could it? When he is with others, or when he writes to others, he is effervescent, scintillating, jocular and playful as he has never been before.

He and Sophie Andreyevna are writing a letter together to Tanya Behrs:

HE: Tanya, dear friend, pity me—my wife is sto-o-pid.

SHE: No, Tanya, he himself is stupid.

HE: The news that we are both stupid must deeply grieve you; but after grief consolation always comes: we both are mighty glad to be stupid, and we do not want to be otherwise.

SHE: No, I want him to be intelligent.

HE: That is unexpected. Do you feel, Tanya, how, while writing this, we roll with laughter? . . .

In their intoxication they fool like children. And, when he is alone, Tolstoy writes pages like this in his diary:

" . . . I love her when, in the night or in the morning, she awakens me and looks at me. . . . I love her when, seated one beside the other, we both feel that we love each other with all our strength. 'Leo!' she says, and then asks, after a pause: 'Why is it that the chimneys on the roofs of the houses stand so straight?' or 'Why is it that horses have such a hard life?' I love her when, after I have remained with her for some time, I ask her: 'Sonya, what are we going to do?' and she laughs. I love her when, arguing with me, she suddenly dilates her eyes, tries to look angry, and quickly throws at me the words: 'Leave me alone! I am tired of you!' Here she is, a minute later, timidly smiling at me. I love her when, a little girl in a yellow dress, she thrusts out her jaw and shows me her tongue. I love to see her head thrown back, her passionate, serious, frightened face; the face of a child, I love her when . . ."

II

Eight months of their married life have passed in the house at Yassnaya Polyana. The trend of their relationship has definitely

shaped itself. Blinded by passion, Tolstoy had leaped into the unknown; now, there can be no doubt as to where he has landed.

No sooner had the most acute stage of his love-intoxication passed than it became evident that Tolstoy would not permit that their married relationship should take the course which chance, or Countess Sophie Andreyevna, might dictate. No—he would certainly be master of the situation, and a peremptory, exacting master, at that. The fact is that he has in his mind, and has long since had, a very definite picture of what constitutes an ideal wife and a perfect family life. Such a wife must satisfy a whole list of requirements. She must be good-looking, sincere, simple, kind, submissive—we know that he dreamed all of this even in the Caucasus. But this is far from being all. He has the deep disgust of a Russian nobleman of the old régime, and, perhaps still more, of an innate enemy of all fashionable ideas, for the so-called modern women of the radical, intellectual type. “Emancipated women, if you please? Merely wenches!” A girl attending the University, or smoking a cigarette—such creatures sicken him. He is not enthusiastic about the feminine generation preceding his own,—about the frivolous, Frenchified beauties of the Catherinian age, either. Doubtless, a good wife must consummately possess the varnish of high society; but the moment she has become a wife, she must relinquish that society for good, forget all “light-minded” social amusements “filled with immoral temptations,” and devote herself completely to her husband and her family. Is this Tolstoy’s possessive despotic jealousy, the greed of a “natural” man? At bottom—yes. But there are also present in his mind certain rationalistic, moralistic considerations, in the manner of Rousseau, which flatteringly contrive to sublimate this physiological bottom into a philosophic thesis. Woman must above all be a healthy, fertile, laborious mother; only a marriage of this type is moral and true to nature; marriage without children is “despicable filth.” In this, again, Tolstoy is the atavistically patriarchal old boyar, or perhaps peasant, for does not his conception of family happiness remind one of a peasant household, with a sturdy, hard-working mother of some ten lads as the center of it? Ideas of her own a wife is certainly not expected to have: “the only true woman is that woman who has the gift of imbibing and assimilating all that which emanates



PLOWING
A painting by I. Ryepin

from the man," and who, accordingly, "looks at everything through the eyes of her husband."

Beauty, kindness, simplicity, excellent health, etc.—Sophie Andreyevna possesses all that. Nor can she be accused, with her strictly conservative upbringing, of any proneness to emancipation. But at the time of her marriage, she was, in many other respects, exactly the opposite of her husband's drastic ideal. A typical Moscow society girl, she was flirtatious, fond of balls, avid of amusements, and girlishly frivolous. Moreover, in spite of her youth, she had character of her own. In the midst of happiness, there began a period of mutual adjustment which did not pass without friction.

They were on a visit to Moscow. She was trying on a new hat, and her large eyes shone with delight when Tolstoy entered. Seeing her excitement, he soured, emitted a bitter remark. This love for "rags," this "unpardonable light-mindedness," "offended" their love. She was already pregnant, and her nerves were uncontrollable; besides, she is in general, temperamental, sincere, explosive. He saw how her face wrinkled up into an offended, childishly helpless grimace; she raised her voice, stamped her feet and burst into tears. Horrified by his "brutality" he cried, too; yet, while all was ending in kisses, he continued to insist on his philosophic tragedy of offended love, and it was she who apologized. She also cried bitterly in the night when she did not go to a ball in Tula: "Lyovochka" (Leo), you see, was adamant in his conviction that "it is a shame for married women to display their nakedness," that is to say, to appear in *décolleté* gowns; hence, he went there alone, since he had to see some one there, leaving her at home.

But these were not the only causes of misunderstandings; it was not easy to please "Lyovochka." In her first days at Yasnaya, guessing, with the infallible instinct of an enamored woman, her husband's wishes, she had determined to become his zealous assistant in his favorite rôle of country squire. This touched and delighted him. She took upon herself the supervision of the dairy of the estate. Unfortunately, after having visited the cow-yard once or twice, she understood that she could not go on with it; pregnant as she was, she vomited every time she caught the odor of the manure and of the cows. When Tolstoy learned of this, his face immediately reflected displeasure, and he shrugged

his shoulders angrily; he took it all for the caprice of a spoiled society girl. Again, of course, there were tears. At moments, the young countess revolted against "living under the domination of his will," against "looking at everything through his eyes," and wrote sad pages in her diary. But her greatest fear was that he would find out "that I am stupid" and would "cease to love." Had it not been for Mlle. Yergolsky, who bestowed upon Léon's wife all the affection which she had had for the two preceding Countesses Tolstoy, and who, understanding all with the dispassionate wisdom of the older age, soothed, petted and pitied her, Sophie Andreyevna often would have been very unfortunate.

At the same time he, too, feared above all to lose her love, and what monsters his fiery imagination and passion did not draw! They had a misunderstanding? He was sure that his treasure, his happiness, was irretrievably lost. "Every such misunderstanding is an incision on our love. The momentary feeling of irritation, of wounded pride, etc., will pass, but a deep cut in the best there is in the world, in our love, will remain. . . ." Unaccustomed to the solitude of the large country-house, she, remembering how she fooled in the city with her sister, would sometimes jump up, gallop through the rooms, laugh and shriek: "I am possessed!" Even this childishness which he so passionately adored in her filled him with fears: "I am afraid of such moods above all. . . . She is too young, . . . she will stifle a great deal in herself for my sake, but then will unconsciously put it all on my account. . . ."

But this period, these months of friction and of fighting with windmills, are over. It was Sophie Andreyevna who submitted, or, rather, the process was different: she has undergone a fundamental change: she has become what he wants her to be. Her somewhat childish admiration for his genius has always been unshakable; her love has never flinched for a moment; her feminine instinct has quickly grasped the ideal he has set up; and she has lived up to it. Moreover, there is in her a great deal of that healthy, "natural," unthinking woman he aspires to have her be. Under the pressure of his will, she has, psychologically speaking, dropped the bright plumage of the marry-me age and donned the sober domestic dress she was required to wear. The feeling of her approaching motherhood has awakened in her the instinct of generations of docile, patriarchal mothers, and her

girlish interests have, naturally and without effort, evaporated. Busy and efficient, she supervises the restoration of the house, works, attends to numberless domestic details; her flexible figure betraying an advanced stage of pregnancy, she can be seen flying all over the estate; and she does it all with the "spontaneous joyfulness of a bird building its nest and singing while it builds," which deeply touches and delights Tolstoy. The physical passion drawing them to each other remains as powerful and exacting on both sides as it ever was; it is this omnipotent bond, no doubt, that enabled them to traverse the period of their misunderstandings, that enabled her to re-form and re-shape herself so easily. Yet, it is this passion, too, that is responsible for the quarrels they still have—for the quarrels arising out of jealousy. Indeed, jealousy, absolutely unfounded jealousy, plays quite a rôle in their relations. She senses a potential rival "in every good-looking or bad-looking woman to whom he talks with a smile"; he grinds his teeth at perceiving each appreciative glance thrown at her by any man. This has often led to characteristic, comically sad results. Only recently, for instance, disguised as a peasant woman, she secretly followed him whenever he went with his shooting-gun to the forest, and spied on him, hiding behind the trees; she earnestly believed that, repelled by her pregnancy, he had renewed his liaison with that peasant heroine who had been his mistress before his marriage. (Tortured by a typically Tolstoyan torture of conscience, by the thought that he, "the old rake," was going to marry an innocent girl, he had, on the eve of their marriage, shown Sophie Andreyevna his diary, with the record of his "downfalls"; it is in this way that she learned of the existence of that woman. Let it be added that, generally speaking, the revelation in this diary of "all the depth of man's debauchery" made the most painful impression on her, an impression which she will never forget.) And whenever he goes somewhere where he can meet Princess A. Obolensky, she is all restlessness and anxiety. As to him, he commits even greater absurdities. For instance, he once expelled from Yasnaya, on a very unsatisfactory pretext, one Pissarev, a young man whose only crime was that he dared to pay Sophie Andreyevna a few more compliments than were strictly necessary. Truly, they clutch each other with a wild, somewhat animal grip and greed. But neither minds it; they fully understand this weakness in each other.

The bliss in which they live remains as complete as any men living in this world can experience. Years later, re-reading her diary, Sophie Andreyevna will note: "It is so funny to re-read it. What contradictions there are in it; one might think that I am an unfortunate woman. And, in reality, are there women happier than I? Are there couples more united, more happy? Sometimes, remaining alone in the room, I begin to laugh at the joy of that happiness and to cross myself: God grant that it may continue! . . . Now, too, we sometimes have misunderstandings, but they come from such subtle spiritual causes that they would not occur if we did not love. Soon it will be six years that we have been married. But I love him only more and more. . . . I love him with the same anxiety, and passion, and jealousy, and poetry as ever. . . ."

He also is "the happiest of husbands." He writes: ". . . She is so incredibly good, so pure and harmonious. . . . At such moments, I feel that I do not possess her, although she gives herself to me. I do not possess her, because I dare not, because I do not feel worthy of her. . . . Something tortures me. It is the jealousy for that man who would be fully her equal. I am not. . . ."

III

Throughout the winter Countess Alexandra has had practically no news of her "grandson"—his promise to write at length when he becomes "more accustomed" has remained unfulfilled; and she rebukes him for his neglect, with jocularly tender reproach: "*Vous êtes,*" she writes to him, "*absolument comme les romans qui d'ordinaire s'arrêtent au chapitre du mariage—c'est à dire où la vie devient la plus intéressante, parce qu'on est appelé à mettre en œuvre tous les matériaux préparés jusque là. . . . Après avoir partagé toutes les bourrasques de votre existence il me semblait que j'avais le droit d'avoir quelques nouvelles du port où vous êtes arrivés. . . .*"

Tolstoy's answer breathes with the old affection for his best friend; but the keynote of his apologies is this: what can he write? As he later will write to her: "*Les peuples heureux n'ont pas d'histoire. . . .*" Indeed, he has no history now; no external history, at least. "I am a new, an absolutely new, man." There is no more room in his life for tumult and escapades; marriage and the responsibilities it entails have anchored him to Yasnaya,

have forced his existence into an established and well-ordered channel. "I feel," he will write to his friend on another occasion, "like an apple-tree whose boughs grew wildly in all directions, and which now has been propped, clipped and tied by life in such a way that it may strike deeper roots and grow straight up in one solid trunk." Does this mean that his too protracted youth with its whimsical adventures is ended? "I have entered that course of family life which, no matter how great may be one's vanity and thirst of originality, leads one along the road of moderation, duty and moral tranquillity. And it is well that it does lead one along this road! Never have I felt all of myself, all of my soul, as intensely as I feel them now, when passions and impulses know their limits." At last, life has tamed him; it may be a misfortune to his biographer, but what a joyous sigh of relief he draws!

A powerful instinct to acquire, to accumulate wealth, to build up a solid material well-being for his wife and for himself has awakened in him. It is a "selfish" desire? Yes, he shouts to himself, as though challenging his former, humanitarian, moral, nebulous dreams—it is selfish, selfish, and thank the Lord that it is selfish! At last happy, he wants to *live*, not to philosophize about life. And the eternal problems? What does he care! "The little girl in the yellow dress" is infinitely more real and important than all of these problems. For the first time in his life, he feels released from the prison of his own mind with its rectangular doctrines—from this darkest and most oppressive of all prisons. He is in the administration of Yassnaya and Nicholskoye (upon Count Nicholas's death, he had inherited that estate, as well). He buys and breeds pedigreed Japanese pigs ("what gorgeous snouts!"), established a new apiary, lays plans for a distillery which can yield much money, etc. Some of these enterprises miscarry—he is too impetuous and passionate. Yet this is no longer "playing the country-squire"; it is an absorbing, serious, admittedly "selfish" practical activity.

How about his pedagogical activities, the school, the *Yassnaya Polyana*? He will soon dismiss the teachers, stop the publication of the review. He wonders: How could he have wasted so much passion and time on such false humanitarianism? For he now looks at his former self without idealization—it was all a hypocritical "Pharisaian hobby of youth . . . even the so-called

self-sacrifice and virtue were only the satisfaction of one abnormally developed passion," of "vanity."

"... Having grown big, I cannot continue [in this mood]. And it is all her. She does not know and will never understand how infinitely more she regenerates me than I her. Only not consciously. For consciously both she and I are powerless. . . ." And in this reaction against his former self, as might be expected, he is as uncompromising as he is in any new mood of his. This is the summer of 1863, when every one is talking about the Polish uprising, when blood is being shed, when rather drastic measures are being applied to the rebels. What does he think about it all? He does not approve of the Government's severity. Yet he will write to Foeth: "... It is absolutely immaterial to me that Poles are being thrashed, that some one is taking Schleswig-Holstein, that some persons pronounce speeches in congresses. . . . Butchers are killing the bulls, too, and we are eating their meat; but I feel no moral obligation to give thought to it all." If, however, as a former officer, he should be called to the colors again, he will "unhook the sword from the rust-covered nail" and do his duty (the anarchistic protests, too, are forgotten); but, since so far this has not happened, he merely does not care. Both physically and morally, he has shut himself up in Yassnaya with his happiness; it is not his affair if the rest of the world goes topsy-turvy. It is true that at times, old moods assail him in sudden, spasmodic attacks. He, as it were, looks around and becomes horrified by his "selfishness."

"It is terribly precarious and foolish to tie up one's happiness to things material—wife, children, health, wealth. No, the traveling monk [whom he happened to meet] is right,—one may have a wife, children, health, etc., but the chief thing is not there. . . . I have forgotten God; I must seek Him again. . . ." And he walks about, nervous, silent, frowning, for a day or two. In his mind, he even accuses her who made him "forget God." But then—or is it merely an unconscious self-deceit, a Sophistic escape from an embarrassing question?—always the same idea—or instinct—reestablishes his spiritual balance, plunges him anew into joyous assurance. "To seek God?" But how can one seek Him if He is life itself, if "the little girl in the yellow dress," and all these familiar faces of Yassnaya, and the odor of hay pouring in

through the window, and this thirst of unthinking happiness are all Him, are all permeated with Him?

His disposition has visibly changed. It is not only that his former unevenness of character and occasional quarrelsomeness have disappeared—at least to a certain extent; all agree that he has never been as fascinating and as kind to all as he is now. It seems that, having become “selfish,” having ceased to pursue the phantom of abstract kindness, he has, unexpectedly for himself, lived up to the dream of his youth, for now he actually “emits from himself, like a spider, a whole web of love and catches into it whomever he encounters—a child, a woman, an octogenarian, a policeman.” During these months, the Yassnopolyanian house is full of people: Tanya Behrs, Sophie Andreyevna’s sister, and some of her brothers, are spending the summer (and will spend the following summers) with the Tolstoys, and Countess Marie Nicholayevna, with her two daughters, girls of fourteen and fifteen, is living here. It is remarkable how all this little world clings to him and seeks him out. It is not only that he constantly manages Countess Marie Nicholayevna’s affairs, helps this one or that one financially, rides somewhere or writes to some one to straighten out so-and-so’s or so-and-so’s troubles; he is everybody’s infinitely tactful adviser, consoler and confidant in all delicate affairs, in all great and little joys and sorrows. He learns, for instance, that Sasha (Alexander) Behrs, one of his youthful brothers-in-law, who has just graduated from a military school, has fallen into deep melancholy, suffocating in the dirty little Polish village where his battery is stationed; see what words he finds to cheer up the young man:

“. . . Believe me or not [he writes], I envy you. Oh, how good it is at your age to spend some time in seclusion, *tête-à-tête* with yourself, and with a little group of artillery officers around—with men whom you have come to know through and through and to whom you are united by the ties of good comradeship. . . . Do you play chess? I cannot conceive of such a life without chess, books, hunting. *Should a war break out, it would be quite excellent.* I am very happy, but, picturing your life to myself, I cannot help feeling that the very essence of happiness is to be nineteen years old, to ride in front of an artillery division, to light a cigarette, to stick the finger into the lint-stock which

Cannonier No. 4, some 'Zakharcherko,' is giving to you, and to reflect: 'If only they knew what a hell-of-a-fellow I am!'"

IV

Noon: they dine early at Yassnaya Polyana. After two hours of work (he works in the morning) he emerges from his study (to which no one has access while he is there) into the dining-room. His eyes immediately seek and find Sophie Andreyevna; he quickly comes up to her, kisses her hand and scrutinizes her; "scrutinizes," for she has a peculiar feeling, that feeling which also his and her children will have and describe some years later, that "he sees through her," that "one can have no secret from him," that his eyes, charged with strange animal magnetism, penetrate into her mood, thoughts, bodily feelings; and if everything he sees is pleasing, he smiles happily. If his work has been successful, he is joyously excited; he tries to hide his emotion behind a jest: "I have once more left a particle of myself in the ink-stand." When some one of his favorite friends, Foeth or Dyakov, are in the house, the dinner passes in an uninterrupted cascade of jests, laughter and merriment.

Afternoon: a hunting party with wolf-hounds; he adores these parties, as he adored them before: "They interfere with my work, but I cannot give them up." He often hunts together with Tanya Behrs; good-looking, clever, as spontaneous and lively as a fire-cracker, youthfully selfish and enamored with herself, she is his favorite sister-in-law. In the midst of such a party, the girth of Tanya's saddle gets loose; she quickly slides down to one side, her horse stops, and she finds herself with her head down, almost touching the earth, and her legs up, entangled in the *amazone* and stirrups. "Help, help! . . ." At this moment she hears the quickly approaching thuds of hoofs and, still hanging in this position, observes the following spectacle. First, a hare shoots across the lawn; then, like arrows, wolf-hounds dart after it; and then Tolstoy, fused into one massive group with his mighty white steed, gallops full speed out of the green. Flashing eyes, the long beard flying in the wind—the living sculpture of "the mighty hunter before the Lord." . . . "Help!" Tolstoy (quickly): "Oh, wait, my dear!" and he disappears after the wolf-hounds. . . . Of course, a few minutes later, he comes to the girl's rescue; but even then his first words are: "By Heaven! it

got away." Indeed, when he sees a hare or a fox, he forgets every one—not only Tanya Behrs, but even his wife and himself.

And here is a summer night. The dining-room is transformed into a theater, with a stage and orchestra seats. On the peremptory request of Sophie Andreyevna and of all the young folk living in the house, Tolstoy wrote a one-act comedy, "The Nihilist," and this is the night of the performance. Owing to the lack of young men, some of the masculine parts have been assigned to women; thus, Sophie Andreyevna plays (and plays very well) the husband who is constantly jealous of his wife, one of Countess Marie Nicholayevna's daughters is the impertinent young student Nihilist, etc. But the unexpected star out-shining all on the stage is Countess Marie Nicholayevna herself; improvising her rôle, she plays an old nun (she categorically refused to learn anything by heart), and her improvisations are so brilliant, her hypocritically sweet intonations, tinged with peasant-dialect, so true to life, that all laugh their heads off. Tolstoy himself who had never suspected to find such striking dramatic talent in his dignified sister, is especially delighted. Of course, the next day the sheets on which the comedy—Tolstoy's first comedy—is written are scattered all over the house, and no one thinks of preserving them; it is only by chance that they find their way into a chest of drawers, whence they will be unearthed and published some fourteen years after their author's death.

V

Finally, however, in this peaceful routine of days marked by nothing but satisfaction and happiness, there comes a day which is infinitely significant to Tolstoy. Again it is but a trivial event—for what is more trivial than the birth of a child? But through what a whirlwind of joys and sufferings it makes him pass! It is on July 10, 1863. When he is awakened, sees Sophie Andreyevna's face with its changed, unusual eyes in which, it seems, "the very core of her soul is shining," in which there is pain, supreme resolution, supreme happiness; when he understands that the moment is coming—he is calm, "as on the eve of battles"; he even mistakes his calmness for indifference. He tries to do everything as well and efficiently as he can—to put the large old sofa on which, thirty-five years ago, he himself was born, into her room; to fetch the midwife and the doctor from Tula, etc.; he only feels

how a wave of some emotion which he is unable to express in words grows in him. And this wave rises especially high in those moments when, after each new spasm of pain, she smiles at him and implores *him* not to suffer, not to lose courage. . . .

He stays with her until the last moment, holding her stiffening, desperately struggling body in his arms. His only prayer to God—for he does not cease to pray—is that He should grant her death as soon as possible; he has no doubt that these superhuman sufferings can end only in death. And when, after the last, protracted, bestially horrible scream, all becomes quiet and he understands that she is alive, and that this little thing “fluttering in the experienced hands of the midwife, like a little flame over the candle” is his child, a new human being, he seizes his head in both hands, rushes out of the room and, sobbing loudly, runs to his study. And here, plunged into his chair, he understands what he has been feeling all of this time, what wave has been rising in him. He “understands that that which happened is similar to that which . . . had happened at the death-bed of his brother Nicholas.” There it was a sorrow, and here it is a supreme joy; there some one went into the unknown, and here, just as mysteriously and unintelligibly, some one has emerged from the unknown; but in both cases, the mysterious happening was enveloped in pains and untold sufferings, in both cases he felt the immediate contact with that unknown which he has always feared, desired and interrogated.

The child born is his first son, the future Count Serge Lvovich.

VI

In the years preceding his marriage, Tolstoy's thoughts were far from literature; no work of fiction of his composition had appeared since 1859. As might be expected, his thoughts were still further from literature during the first period of his happiness. It is true that, two months after his marriage (at the end of 1862), financial considerations prompted him to sell two novellettes to Katkov, the publisher of *The Russian Messenger*. These novelettes, however, had for long been lying among his unpublished manuscripts; the first of them, “The Cossacks,” he had conceived and begun ten years before, while living in the Caucasus, and completed in the years that followed; and the second, “Polikushka,” he had written shortly after Count Nich-

olas's death. Thus, he had now merely to polish them. Yet, even this he did reluctantly, and remained dissatisfied with his work. "Terribly weak," he judged "The Cossacks"; "yet it is not impossible that the public will like it for exactly that reason."

Indeed, the public liked "The Cossacks," but not because the novelette was "terribly weak." With his amazing lack of self-appreciation as an artist, Tolstoy had again hopelessly underrated his performance. The fact is that "The Cossacks" is the most perfect work of fiction that Tolstoy wrote before his marriage. In no story of his has he attained such lavish, almost blinding, richness of color and life-sap in combination with such epic aloofness, as here. The subject of the novelette is already known to us: Olenin, a young man entangled in "debts and bad habits," flees from Moscow to the Caucasus, falls in love with a simple Cossack woman, spends entire days in the forest with the old Cossack Yeroshka (in whom we immediately identify Yepishka, in all his picturesqueness), decided to forsake civilization and to revert to nature, etc. In other words, it is the fiction equivalent of one more link of Tolstoy's biography.

For seven years, that is to say, since the publication of "Sebastopol Stories," Tolstoy had not been so extolled by critics as he was now. But what could it matter to him who was completely absorbed in his family life, who was "breathlessly happy"? Indeed, this unexpected success left him absolutely cold, as though it had been not his success at all. Even the enthusiastic praise of Foeth, whom it was hard to please and whose critical judgment he therefore valued very highly, failed to impress him. Answering the poet's letter he wrote:

"... I am living in a world so remote from literature and literary criticism that, on the receipt of your letter, my first reaction was astonishment. Who is, indeed, that fellow who wrote 'The Cossacks' and 'Polikushka'? And what is the use of talking about them? The paper will suffer anything, and the publisher will pay money for any trash. But this was only my first reaction, for, after having pondered over your words and dug into my mind for some time, I found there, in a distant corner, in a pile of old, long-since-forgotten rubbish, something very nebulous, entitled 'Things Artistic' . . . And—mind you—I even enjoyed turning over these once adored things. . . ."

There was not a shade of exaggeration or pose in this letter

(of that kind of exaggeration or pose Tolstoy is, generally speaking, incapable); he long since quite earnestly ceased to regard himself as a writer. This, since the very beginning of their married life, deeply grieved Sophie Andreyevna; intimacy, this sand that so often scrapes the gilt off the most cherished idols, did not diminish by an iota her admiration, nay, adoration of his talent. When he spent entire hours in the cow-yard, at the apiary, and in other pursuits befitting a country-squire, she sighed: "One does not need Leo's talent to do that; he is wasting his time."

VII

It is the fall of 1863. The summer guests have left, and the Yassnopolyanian house no longer echoes the merriment of young, girlish voices. Sophie Andreyevna, now a zealous mother, is in the nursery most of the day. As to Tolstoy, the hours which he spends in the study become longer and longer. A complete change has come over him; he notes: "It is long since I have had such an itch to write and such a feeling of confident self-assurance . . . I have grown terribly big . . . Now, I am a writer with all the strength of my soul, and I write and plan as I have never written and planned before." All his creative muscles are once more strained.

The change came gradually, partly in the spring, partly in the summer (we know that already then he often "left a particle of himself in the ink-stand"), but chiefly now, in the fall. By what has it been caused? "Only a happy man can work as I am working." With the birth of the first child the process of the "propping, clipping and tying up" of the "apple-tree" has been completed; increased responsibilities have banished the last remnants of philosophic escapades; unclouded satisfaction; all is clear and smooth for the future. There is nothing which might stifle or trouble Tolstoy's creative instinct; and this instinct, as powerful as a peremptory physiological necessity, clamors for satisfaction. He must create, as he must love; and he creates.

Since early spring he had been looking for subjects, searching his old note-books. He thought of continuing "The Cossacks"; the novelette, although, so to speak, self-sufficient, is so written that it could be continued. But the work did not go well, and he gave it up. He worked, too, on "Kholstomyer—The Story of a Horse." He had for long had the idea of this in mind.

The idea had come to him years ago, soon after his return from Sebastopol. He once was walking in the fields with Turgenev, then still his friend. Both being in a bad humor and discussing something with irritation, they were on the point of quarreling. Suddenly, Tolstoy perceived an old, emaciated, skeleton-like horse, with protruding bones and impotent, bowed legs. His mood suddenly changed, his eyes flashed with boyish joy. He ran up to the old animal and shouted: "Turgenev, do you want me to tell you what this fellow thinks?" And then, stroking and caressing its miserable head, he began to improvise its story, to "remember" its youth and to speak out its feelings with such supernatural understanding that, forgetting his irritation, Turgenev listened with wide open eyes. "I felt," he was to write afterwards, "as though Tolstoy had not only himself entered that horse's mind, but that he had ushered me there, as well—so indisputably true, convincing and artistic was everything he said. Unable to restrain myself, I finally said: 'Certainly, you must yourself have been a horse in one of your previous incarnations!'"

Tolstoy decided to put his improvisation on paper and to write "the story of a horse," but at that time something distracted him. Now, however, he actually began to write it. He wrote several chapters in which there are pages permeated with such clairvoyance of animal flesh and life as he alone possessed. But, pitiless critic of his own works, he remained dissatisfied. Moreover, he felt that only a large novel could satisfy him, while "Kholstomyer" would be a short story or a novelette. Thus, this manuscript, too, was tossed aside. It is only after many years that it will be finished.

But months passed. Now, in the fall, it is already long since he has found subject. And the more Tolstoy meditates, jots down, sketches, the more enthusiastic he grows. It will be a historical novel, and what a novel! His attention had long ago been captivated by one unusually dramatic and interesting moment of Russian history—by that abortive revolution through which a group of enlightened Russian aristocrats imbibed with French liberatory ideas attempted to overthrow the Emperor Nicholas I, in December 1825. They are known in history as the Decembrists, and he thought of entitling his novel in which their attempt would be depicted "The Decembrists." He began to work and even jotted down several scenes, but then, suddenly,

he felt that he could not characterize his heroes without having first characterized the preceding epoch during which they imbibed the spirit of the eighteenth century, of Voltaire, Montesquieu and the French Revolution. He began to study that epoch, and the deeper he went into it, the wider his original plan spread, acquiring more and more daring proportions. As he conceives his future work now, "The Decembrists" will only be one of its parts. The novel—or how should he call it, "the poem" or "the epic"?—will open with the year 1805, when Russian armies fought in Austrian lands against Napoleon. Then its heroes—there will be two or three generations of them—will pass through the year 1812—the invasion of Moscow by Napoleon; they will participate in the Decembrist revolt of 1825; finally, the youngest of them will see the Crimean War of 1854-1856, the liberation of serfs, the advent of new times. Thus, it will be a colossal panorama of the entire nineteenth century. Will he be able to carry out this truly titanic conception, to bear the sustained creative effort of five, perhaps ten years? Far from frightening him, the difficulty of the problem only adds to his enthusiasm: "I have the feeling—or am I mistaken?—that I can master any subject." He does not know what he will call his work; perhaps, "Three Epochs." In any case, he as yet has no idea that it will become known to the world under the title of "War and Peace."

For this novel an extensive preparatory work of research is needed, and he is now intent upon it. The first part will open with the year 1805; he wishes to be strictly accurate in the description of the historical background. The historical and the imaginary heroes who will fill the novel must speak and move with the unmistakable intonations, the peculiarities of speech and of manner of 1805; so to speak, every star or ribbon on the breast of a courtier, every beauty-spot on the cheek of a lady, must be in the right place: "Writing of things historical, I want to be impeccably true to facts." He has always been interested in that epoch and is exceptionally well read on it. Moreover, since childhood, he has heard a great deal about it from his father, Mlle. Yergolsky, etc., for it was their epoch. But this is not enough. Numbers of persons and book-shops in Moscow and Petersburg constantly send him on his request scores of Russian, French and German monographs, histories, memoirs and collections of documents, and he tirelessly absorbs them. Moreover, there are friends

who supply him with unpublished letters and other documents from family archives and add comment on them derived from unwritten family traditions; this material, with its rich human coloring, is especially precious and valuable to him.

Towards the beginning of the winter, most of this work is performed, and he feels that he has his "elbows free"; he is "at home" in 1805. Moreover, the main group of characters have clearly shaped themselves in his mind. And yet, for a long time, in spite of all his efforts, he cannot actually *begin*. He passes through those sufferings not unfamiliar to many artists when ideas, descriptions and situations crowd the mind too densely and intensely to find exit on paper. "I wrote the beginning an endless number of times, and each time threw it away. . . . Either the method, the stroke, which I used for the beginning seemed to me petty; or I wanted to embrace at once by my pen all I knew and felt, and realized it was impossible; or else, the simple, banal language and ways of the novel struck me as hopelessly unbecoming the majestic, deep and wide events; or, finally, I would become so disgusted by the necessity of connecting with deliberately invented links the ideas and images which were spontaneously born in my mind that I threw the whole thing away and lost all hope of succeeding to express that which I had to express. . . . Time and energy were being wasted with every hour. . . ." Perhaps the main source of his tortures lies in the realization of the fact that this present novel will be infinitely more important than any of his preceding works. "All I wrote before," he will write to Foeth, "was only attempts and experiments." He controls himself most of the time; but there are moments when his nervous tension breaks out in tempests of unreasonable irritation; there even occurs one scene that is absolutely exceptional in his relations with Sophie Andreyevna. Once, dissatisfied by something she said, he brusquely withdraws to his study; desiring to straighten out the misunderstanding, she follows him; but when she touches his arm, he jumps up with a face distorted with wrath and, exclaiming "Leave me!" seizes from the table a heavy tray with tea cups and saucers and smashes it on the floor. This is the only case of this kind of behavior in all his life.* Yet, rising by an effort of will-power over

*In her memoirs written sixty years later, Mme. Kuzminsky (T. Behrs) will place this scene in 1865; we have reason to believe that it took place at the time with which we are now dealing; that is, in 1863.

this anguish, he calms himself time and again. It is all normal. "Creative work is like childbirth: the fruit does not emerge until it is fully ripe and then it emerges with pangs and sufferings." Finally, the day comes when he succeeds in compelling himself to lay aside hesitation and self-consciousness.

A month or two later Sophie Andreyevna sees him constantly in his study; later still, she will note: "During this winter Lyovochka is all the time writing, with emotion, with passion and with tears in his eyes. . . ."

VIII

A year has passed; it is the end of 1864. Tolstoy is living in Moscow, in the Kremlin apartment of the Behrs. He had to leave Sophie Andreyevna and come here because he must undergo an operation.

Two months ago he was riding on a young horse to the estate of a neighbor; two wolf-hounds were accompanying him. Suddenly he perceived a hare on the road; although he did not intend it to be a hunting promenade, he could not withstand the temptation, and commanded "*Atoo yevol!*" ("After him!") and raced after them. The horse encountered a ditch, and, not being trained for the chase, stumbled and rolled down, carrying the rider with him. When Leo Nicholayevich came back to his senses, he felt a strong pain in the right arm, which was dislocated and broken. The horse was not there. He got up with great difficulty and walked back to the road, trying to collect his thoughts. He remembered that he was chasing a hare and that the horse stumbled, but that event was obscured in mist and seemed to have happened "very long ago." Then, two troubling thoughts came: how should he break the news to Sophie Andreyevna in her present condition (she was again in an advanced stage of pregnancy) and, what would become of the novel? Unable to combat the weakness, the pain and these thoughts, he sank to the ground at the side of the road and lay there until a peasant picked him up and brought him in his cart to Yassnaya.

Within a few days he had recovered, except, of course, for his arm. Referring to the worrying thoughts about the novel which he had had after the fall, he would write some time later to Foeth: "Do you know what a queer thing about myself I will tell you? As I came back to my senses, after having been thrown



TOLSTOY IN 1887

A portrait by I. Ryepin

to the ground by the horse, I made an important discovery: I definitely understood that I am a writer!" What a Tolstoyan way of making "discoveries"! Meanwhile, a few days after the event, Sophie Andreyevna gave birth to a girl (who will be named, after Mlle. Yergolsky, Tatyana). This naturally distracted Tolstoy's attention far away from his own condition, and he completely forgot the accident. Yet, at the end of two or three weeks, it became evident that his arm was not improving: it continued to pain and, what was still worse, remained motionless, although the fractured bone had grown together. In spite of all his optimism, he understood that something was wrong and decided to go to Moscow. The Tolstoy family were parting for the first time in the two years of their married life. Sophie Andreyevna, at the last moment, thrust a letter for Tanya Behrs into one of his pockets. "I am [it read] entrusting him to you. Take care of him, do not let him catch a cold, see that he does not overeat, and that the doctors fix his arm properly. . . . Please, sister dear, do not abandon him; do not leave him alone. Sing for him, for he is so fond of your singing; give him jam after dinner (he likes it), and do not allow Styopa [Sophie Andreyevna's nine-year-old brother] to annoy him, especially when he is reading or writing. Pray, do not show this letter to any one,—I do not know why, but I am ashamed of it. My other request, dearest girl, is this: See that a telegram is sent to me immediately after the operation. . . ."

In Moscow, most of the professors pronounce themselves against the operation, which may prove to be dangerous, and prescribe massage and gymnastics. Tolstoy is ready to abide by their advice, but a trifling circumstance suddenly makes him change his mind. Once, in the theater, he asks Tanya, half-jokingly, how she would feel if she had a one-armed husband.

"It would be embarrassing," she answers, after a moment of serious reflexion.

"Why?"

"A one-armed husband would have no manly strength. This would be painful for him and, consequently, for his wife, too."

Tolstoy smiles. He writes to Sophie Andreyevna: ". . . I made up my mind to undergo the operation while I was in the theater. . . . The orchestra was playing; the ballerinas were dancing, Michel Bode had his two arms at his disposal, while I looked

crooked and miserable; the right sleeve was empty, and there was pain in it. . . . It would be a little unpleasant for me to be one-armed; but it would be especially for you that I would suffer. This I fully realized after my conversation with Tanya. . . .”

The day of the operation. Surrounded by the doctors and by the Behrs family, Tolstoy is in the operation chair. The doctors are puzzled by the fact that chloroform does not act on him for a very long time. Finally, he begins to fall asleep; but then, with haggard eyes, he jumps up and cries out: “No, my friends, it is impossible to live that way! I think, I have decided. . . .” What he has decided remains unknown, for he is forced back into the chair, and the bag with chloroform-impregnated cotton is again placed on his face. . . . The operation proves fully successful; Tolstoy’s arm quickly improves.

The broken arm, however, is not the only subject of Tolstoy’s preoccupations and worries in Moscow; the other, and, to him, the far more important subject, is his novel. Throughout the preceding year he had worked on it with unprecedented energy and concentration. There were weeks when he sat up until two o’clock in the morning, wrote and re-wrote “to headaches, without stretching out his back.” The novel became more than a novel; it became the axis of both his and his wife’s life.

From the very beginning of Tolstoy’s work, Sophie Andreyevna had assumed the functions of his secretary; day after day, she copied his pages, which were often rendered unintelligible by long rows of corrections piled up above each line. But her rôle did not stop there. It was only now that it became evident what a truly ideal wife, in the Tolstoyan sense of the word, she was, and how far went her capacity “to imbibe and assimilate all the emanations” of her husband, to make of them the chief subject of her life. He was the creator; her essentially feminine instinct taught her to become the creator’s nurse, soother, comforter, supporter, assistant. No sooner did he read the first chapters to her than the novel became indefinitely dearer to her than it was to him. “When I sit down to copy,” she used to tell him, “I am carried away into a world of poetry, and sometimes it even seems to me that it is not your novel that is so good, but that it is I myself who am so clever.” She did all she could to alleviate his

task; she freed him of most of the current affairs and permitted no worries to reach him. All day long he worked in his study; all day long she, too, worked, with his son at her side, with his other child under her heart, with his novel in her breast and on her mind. And at night he would call her to the drawing-room and read to her what he had written during the day. He was satisfied with it; and, looking at her dilated and delighted eyes and listening to her remarks, often remarkably subtle, he was definitely confirmed in his joyous assurance. On such nights he was happy, perhaps happier than ever; yet, with a thoughtful, sad smile, he would sometimes say things that astonished Sophie Andreyevna: "The poet takes out of his life the best that is in it and puts it into his work; beautiful, therefore, is his work, and his life—bad." Is it possible that, in the midst of this work and happiness, a doubt or reproach should have still persisted in the secret places of his soul? But such moments passed as quickly as they came.

But there were other nights, too, when he realized that all he had written during a week was "to be thrown away"; he would hardly be able to hide his despair; silent, he would start for a walk in the park with her; drawn on by her tactfully and cautiously searching questions, he would begin to speak of the difficulties he had encountered, of situations that might be developed instead of the ones he found unsatisfactory; and, spurred on by her growing curiosity and interest, he would forget his dark mood, would feel a new wave of energy, and, comforted and happy, would look forward with impatience to that hour next morning when he would again enter his study. And so, in such daily co-operation, with such weekly interchange of high and low tides of creative energy, the year passed.

By the time Tolstoy left for Moscow, after the accident, the first part of "The Year 1805" (for this was the title he gave to the beginning of his epic) was completed, and he decided to profit by his trip by selling the work to Katkov's monthly, *The Russian Messenger*. Negotiations are protracted, for Katkov, although enthusiastic about the idea, is alarmed at the author's terms; Tolstoy, who candidly wants to make money on his new book, demands three hundred roubles per "printed sheet" (about three cents a word)—an unusually high price, according to the prevailing rates of the day. While these negotiations are under way,

Tolstoy does not have the manuscript on hand—Sophie Andreyevna is re-copying it for the last time with his latest corrections and modifications. Finally, he receives it from her. "Sending it off to you," she writes, "I felt as though I was sending off a child, and now I am afraid that some harm may come to it. . . ." A few days later he writes to her: ". . . Katkov has accepted all of my terms, and the idiotic bargaining is, at last, finished. . . . But when Lyubimov [the secretary of *The Russian Messenger*] went away with the manuscript and my brief-case remained empty, I felt grieved by that which would probably gladden you: I can no longer correct it and make it still better. . . ." Indeed, Tolstoy is at last a "real writer"; for has he ever spoken with such tenderness about any of his earlier manuscripts? But no; Sophie Andreyevna is not gladdened; she also has a moment of sadness: ". . . It pains me that you sold it. Terrible! To think of your thoughts, emotions, talent, nay, your very soul—as sold!"

He has almost recovered. He spends his last days in Moscow in continuous activity; he is already working on the second part of "The Year 1805." He spends hours in museums and archives, bending over documents. Back in the Behrs' apartment, he dons his wide, blue flannel shirt (this has been long since his domestic working costume) and calls the faithful Tanya; he still cannot write himself, and it is she who takes the dictation. "I remember these hours as though they were yesterday," she will write, sixty years later. "With his face intent with concentration, with his left hand supporting his bandaged right arm, he walked up and down, dictating to me. Taking no heed of me whatsoever, he would mutter peremptorily:

"'No, this won't do! It is banal!"

"Or merely:

"'Strike that out!"

"His tone was peremptory, in his voice there was impatience. Often, while dictating, he changed the same passage three or four times in succession. Sometimes, he dictated smoothly and fluently, as though it were something he knew by heart. But, as a rule, his sentences went with a terrible rush and impetus. I had the feeling that, in thus becoming a witness of his inner world, concealed from all, I was doing something indiscreet. . . ."

But it is not only the witness of his work that Tanya has become during these weeks. For it is to her, too, that he dictates his

letters to Sophie Andreyevna, and these letters fly to Yassnaya every day, without a single interruption. How typical are they in their mixture of burning tenderness with brutish realism! ". . . I have had my supper in that very room and place where you were waiting for me when I proposed to you, and I remembered it all so vividly. How could we help remembering? Thank the Lord that both our reminiscences and our dreams of the future are so good. How good it will be when we meet again, when I will see your joyous face, your face which becomes so wonderful at such moments! But now I remembered with such clearness the frightened face you had then, and the lilac dress you wore. All the time I have been here, I have been showing that place to Tanya with my eyes, but she could not guess what it was . . . What happiness we possess; and yet, when I come back, we will probably again quarrel at times over some broken pots . . . I cannot dictate everything. I love you so all the time, with every manner of loves. And the more I love, the more I fear . . ."

IX

1865; 1866; 1867; 1868; 1869. During the first two of these five years *The Russian Messenger* brings out the first and second parts of "The Year 1805." And then, during the three years that follow, these parts, as well as the rest of the enormous work, appear, already under the title of "War and Peace," in the form of six separate volumes. The appearance of each volume is an event for the press of Riss in Moscow where the novel is being printed. As soon as the text is set in type, proofs are sent to Yassnaya; and they come back from Yassnaya with such a number of corrections, of newly inserted paragraphs, pages and often even chapters, that the whole thing must be re-set. The same happens to the second set of proofs. P. Bartenev, the journalist and historian who supervises the printing, writes desperate letters to the author. "God knows what you are doing! If you go on like this, we will never be through correcting and setting the book . . . The typographic bills are growing to enormous figures . . . I implore you, an end to your continued delving!" But the author is adamant. "I cannot help blotting out and changing. I know for certain that this is of the greatest use to the book and, therefore, I am not afraid of the bills . . . The passages which you like best would not be half as good as they are, if they had not been

re-worked some five times." Yes—five, or even six, seven times, for, before the manuscript is sent to the Riss plant, it is Sophie Andreyevna who, like a true Penelope, performs on it miracles of patience—copying, re-copying and copying it anew, each time with new alterations and corrections. But, finally, the volume is definitely set; Bartenev is about to send it to press; but even then, at the twelfth hour, telegrams pour from Yassnaya: "Please, on page so-and-so, change the word [or the sentence] so-and-so to so-and-so . . ."

To the reading public, however, the appearance of each volume is an event far more significant even than it is to the staff of the Riss' plant. All the newspapers contemplate the work with astonishment: "We do not remember a single case in which the public showed as great an interest in a novel as it is showing for 'War and Peace.' The fourth volume is being awaited not merely with impatience, but with a truly abnormal emotion . . . The book is being sold out with an amazing rapidity . . . 'War and Peace' is being read and discussed literally by all . . . even by those who usually do not read anything . . . The success of Tolstoy's novel is unprecedented." It is more than literary interest. As contemporaries agree, the heroes of "War and Peace" have become as near and dear to all reading Russia as only friends, or relatives can be. New volumes are awaited with that personal keenness with which letters from the front are awaited. Russia of that epoch, with her disproportionately small cultured class, knows no "best-sellers"; yet a miracle happens,—"War and Peace" becomes a best seller. The public is carried away; and the critics? When the novel began to appear Tolstoy, of course, believed that it would "pass unnoticed"; "and I wish it to be the case," he wrote to Foeth; "but what I wish still more is that they [the readers and the critics] should not scold me too hard . . ." He awaited the first reviews with mingled hope and fear. When they began to appear, he was on a short visit to Moscow where he lived, in a hotel, with Alexander Behrs, his brother-in-law. As soon as they got up in the morning, he would hurry the young man (who was an officer) to go out: "You want to become a general of infantry, do you not? Well, I want to become a general of literature. Run out and get the papers!" Now, however, at the beginning of

1870, Tolstoy has given up hope of reading all that is being written about his work. The fact is that, since the appearance of the last volume, reviews and special articles on "War and Peace" pour forth in a torrent which has literally submerged all Russian periodicals. What is the general verdict which can be extracted from this torrent? Some of the extreme, "hundred percent," chauvinistic Nationalists curse Tolstoy for the "cynical disrespect" with which he depicts the leading Russian war-heroes of 1812; some of the radically socialistic critics are outraged at the "reactionary spirit" of his work, that is to say, by the absence of radical sermons; this distorts their vision to such an extent that one of them, the famous Shelgunov, produces the following pearls of critical wisdom: "It is a happy thing," he writes, "that Count Tolstoy does not possess a powerful talent . . . If he did possess the talent of a Shakespeare or of a Byron, no curse would suffice to condemn him . . ." Yet these isolated cases of nationalistic and socialistic idiocy are few. One must give the Russian critics of the epoch their due: an overwhelming majority of them appraise "War and Peace" at its real value. "With the appearance of 'War and Peace' Count L. N. Tolstoy . . . has occupied in contemporary Russian literature a place infinitely superior to all others . . . There has at last arisen a giant who has lifted our literature to a level of which we could not as much as dream." These words of N. Strakhov can be quoted as the summary of the opinion shared by all. Soon, by the way, Strakhov and Tolstoy will become acquainted; and then Strakhov will write to him: ". . . When the Russian Czardom will cease to be, new nations will learn from 'War and Peace' what a people the Russians were . . ."

"War and Peace" begins, as we know, with the year 1805 and ends with the year 1813; that is to say, with the time when Russia, freed of Napoleon's armies, celebrates its salvation on the ruins of Moscow. Only the epilogue of the novel takes place seven years later; this, however, merely rounds up the story of characters whom the reader has followed throughout the six volumes. Such is the chronological scope of the work. Tolstoy's titanic conception of "Three Epochs," embracing all of Russia's story from the beginning of the century to 1856 has remained unfulfilled. From the very first year of his work, Tolstoy segre-

gated a fragment from his colossal original vision and worked out that fragment as an organic literary entity, which is "War and Peace." A majestic fragment!

Thousands of pages have been devoted in all languages to the analysis of the artistic methods and qualities of "War and Peace," and thousands more might, and probably will, be so written. To sum up, even briefly, these methods and qualities, would be impossible here. "War and Peace" is, on the one hand, the panorama not only of the whole of Russia, but of the whole of mankind; in no work of literature does one feel the movement of the masses, the clash and struggle of nations, the dramatic spirit of history with such alarming power as one feels them here. On the other hand, it is the story of an enormous variety (hundreds!) of most dissimilar human lives, from Napoleon and Kutuzov to servant girls, from new-born babies to moribund octogenarians, in which all imaginable feelings, fluctuations of the soul, scenes, situations, landscapes are unfolded with such sensually striking form and color, with such a visual pattern of physical and psychological wrinkles on old faces and of blue veins on young marble skin that every page is carved into the reader's memory. Cosmic lines on the colossal historical canvas and details which seem to have been captured through a microscope; and no detail obliterates the broad lines, no scene is lost.

To gasp with admiration before the portraiture of characters in "War and Peace" has long since become a traditional gesture. Indeed, only men created by the Creator can be more alive than men created by Tolstoy. His methods have changed little since the time of "Childhood"; he has only become infinitely richer and more skilful. As before, he is, at bottom, a naïve and most sensual sensualist—he fully conveys to the reader that powerful appeal which his heroes make to his senses by their physical reality, which is different in each individual person, by the expression of their bodies, faces, manner, etc. As before, he divines their own sensations, the appeal of the world to them, and this divination of his is spontaneously instinctive and unmistakable. Finally, a tireless self-observer, he has such intimate knowledge of the mechanism of spiritual life, the interplay of associations, the counterpoint of often contradictory melodies in the flow of human feelings, the accompanying overtones of each state of mind that, while reading, we recognize that which we know

from our own experience, but which we would not be able to formulate, so volatile and fluctuating it is. Thanks to all this, each character of his is essentially individual; the reader identifies him not only by his voice, face, manners of speech and gestures, but also by the undefinable and impalpable atmosphere that emanates from his person. Even dogs, horses, trees and houses figuring in the novel have their distinct personalities.

Of what material is "War and Peace" contrived? We know how Tolstoy dug up documents, searched archives, etc. Yet this purely bookish material he has used only inasmuch as he described historical events and persons, resuscitated the spirit of the epoch, clothed his heroes in the robes of the time. His main material, especially his human material, consists of the entire wealth of impressions, reminiscences and experiences which he accumulated throughout his life, which he preserved in all freshness and which he dashed into his work. Before describing the battle of Borodino he visited the field of Borodino, analyzed each order issued by Napoleon and by Kutuzov, studied the disposition of each French and Russian regiment. But this description—probably the best description of a battle that has ever been written—would hardly be what it is if he did not have in his mind the panoramas through which he lived in Sebastopol, if his greedy eye did not preserve in all their details the poses, faces and movements of those who died around him in Bastion No. 4. But, of course, it is not only in this sense that Tolstoy's material is personal. If in his former works he was the poet of certain autobiographic moments of his life, of certain separate thoughts and problems that troubled him, here he is the poet of his entire life, of scores of other lives he knows from his experience and even of his family records. For instance, among the enormous number of men figuring in "War and Peace," there stand out two central groups of characters around which most of the action is spun,—the families of Princes Bolkonsky and of Counts Rostov. The old Prince Nicholas Bolkonsky is the stylized portrait of Leo Nicholayevich's maternal grandfather, Prince Nicholas Volkonsky, that very despotic, tyrannical, talented and brilliant *Général-en-chef* of Catherinian times, who established Yassnaya Polyana and whom Leo Nicholayevich knows and loves from numberless family-traditions and reminiscences that have reached him. Old Bolkonsky's daughter, the ill-favored Princess Marie,

with her Christian resignation and kindness, with her ugly face and figure and her beautiful, luminous eyes, is Leo Nicholayevich's mother, whose name was also Marie, and whose portrait, as the reader will remember, coincides almost literally with these characteristics. And the old Count and Countess Rostov are the old Count and Countess Tolstoy, Leo Nicholayevich's paternal grandparents. Like Leo Nicholayevich's picturesque ancestor, the old Count entertains all Moscow at his dinners, sparkling with gold and silver, keeps a large domestic theater composed of specially trained serfs, and drifts smilingly, elegantly, good-naturedly, towards complete ruin. Moreover, at the end of the novel, Count Nicholas Rostov, old Rostov's son, married Princess Marie Bolkonsky, as their creator's father, Count Nicholas Tolstoy, married, half a century ago, Princess Marie Volkonsky. And here is yet another example. There is in "War and Peace" one feminine character which surpasses in its miraculous vividness even most of Tolstoy's characters, and which all single out; it is Natasha, the slim, dark-eyed younger daughter of the Rostovs. Indeed, her transformation from a child into a woman (at the opening of the novel she is thirteen), the overflow of her reckless merriment into unconscious coquetry, the awakening of her passions, etc., are drawn with such physiological wisdom that she seems to have been conceived in a womb, not in the mind of an artist. Who is she? Tanya Behrs, Tolstoy's sister-in-law, with whom we saw him hunting and to whom, after the operation, we saw him dictating chapters from his book. He had long before told her that he was "writing her down." And when she read the manuscript of the first part of the novel, and identified herself, and Mimi, the favorite doll of her childhood, and her singing, and her naïve conversations with her mother on love and marriage, she became afraid of what might presently follow. "Leo," she implored, "do not describe my romance with Anatole! [She had recently had a rather dramatic romance with one Anatole Shostak.] Everybody will recognize him and me, and that will be disgraceful!" The heroine implored her author . . . But "Leo" took his precautions, that is to say, sufficiently disguised the facts, and described it, for Natasha's romance with Prince Anatole Kuraguine is a full equivalent of Tanya's romance with Anatole Shostak. He described her other romances too, with radical changes in dramatic situations, of course. This case is especially interest-

ing, for nowhere did Tolstoy's fiction grow out of reality so spontaneously and immediately: the two girls, Natasha of the novel and Tanya of actual life, literally grew together, changing with every year, the former reflecting each new phase in the development of the latter . . . Finally, there is in the novel one Count Pierre Bezukhov, an enormous, bear-like crank, kind and good-natured, with a broad, childish smile. As a character, he is not the author's self-portrait; yet his moral seekings, his constant search of God and of moral justification of his own life, and the successive spiritual crises through which he passes are unmistakably those through which Tolstoy himself traveled from his youth up to the period of his marriage.

Indeed, if any book can be all of a man who wrote it, "War and Peace" is all of Tolstoy—all that which his mind, memory, emotions, and soul have stored in the course of the forty odd years of his life; all of it, plus all of his genius which, at last, has fully, majestically unfolded its superhuman power.

X

And it is yet something more.

Tolstoy does not like "War and Peace" to be referred to as a "novel." "It is not a novel, still less a poem, still less a historical work." It is that which he wanted to express in that form which he found for expressing it. Indeed, it is not *only* a novel. Beginning with the third volume, it contains a number of passages, segregated in separate chapters, in which the author sets forth his philosophy of history at great length. Illustrating his ideas with examples from the epoch which he describes, he formulates his own theory of the historical process. These philosophical passages are, on the whole, as monotonous and tiresome as the fictional part of the book is interesting. It is only in Tolstoy's obstinate head that the absurd idea of appending them to the novel could be born. And they would unquestionably spoil the effect of the novel, were it not for the fact that the reader can—and almost invariably does—skip them.

Yet, the essence of Tolstoy's historical theory is characteristic and not uninteresting. Briefly told, it is this: "The final aim of history is unknown to us, . . . is unfathomable to human mind." Hence, to talk of "progress," to say that this or that legislative measure is "progressive" or "reactionary," is sheer nonsense—we

know neither what progress, nor what reaction is. We do not know, and we cannot know, the causes of historical events, either. They are infinitely numerous; to amputate one of them, or some of them, from others and to call it (or them) *the* cause or causes is obviously inaccurate. This leads Tolstoy to yet another conclusion. Great men of history, the so-called makers of history, are neither great, nor makers; it is rather they who are made by history, who, blind little marionettes, are elevated by it to lofty positions and who, consciously or unconsciously, obey its mandates. Hence, his undisguised (and obviously bigoted) dislike of Napoleon, this "self-satisfied," cruel, and petty puppet who so sincerely believed in his own greatness. Thus, consummate, unthinking historical fatalism is Tolstoy's theory. And it is, by the way, for this theory that Russian radical critics pronounced him "an advocate of reaction and stagnation."

But the deeper philosophy of the novel does not lie in this; it is to be sought not in these appendices, but in its main body, in fiction. At first sight, this body is absolutely unphilosophic. Tolstoy tells his story with the epic aloofness of Homer (indeed, it is only with the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" that one can compare "War and Peace," not only in scope and perfection, but also in tone). He narrates, and nothing more. Yet, the more aloof is the narrative, the more strikingly one feels the invisible philosophic atmosphere that permeates it. What is this atmosphere? There are, in the novel, many tragedies, deaths, all sorts of suffering. Still, its leitmotif is optimism—the joyous, nay, passionate acceptance of life. It seems that through joy and suffering alike, in hundreds of tongues speaking in it, in thousands of voices, the whole novel sings an enamored, thankful anthem to God and to the world. And this impression is not the result of a blind chance. "The artist's purpose," Tolstoy wrote to a correspondent while he was still working on the novel, "is not to solve problems, but to make the reader love life in all its innumerable, inexhaustible forms . . . If I were told that I could write a novel in which I would indisputably formulate all of my social and political views, I would not spend even two hours on such a novel; if, however, I were told that what I would write would be read twenty years from now by those who now are children, and that, while reading it, they would laugh and cry, and would learn to love life, I would devote all my life and all my energies to such a work."

It is in the epilogue of the novel that this feeling rises to its climax. The two thousand pages of the novel, with the colossal universe they contain, have floated by. After the death of her fiancé, the young Prince Andrew Bolkonsky, Natasha has married Count Pierre Bezukhov. She has changed so as to be almost completely unrecognizable. A slim girl, in the past all poetry, all romance and expectation of romance, she is now a powerful, broad-hipped and strong-breasted female; slatternly and disheveled, she lives entirely in her husband and in her children, whom she nurses herself; she has forgotten society; she now "values only the company of those people to whom she can walk out from the nursery disheveled, in a chamber-robe; to whom she can show, with a beaming face, a swaddling-cloth on which there is a yellow spot instead of a green one and who, looking at it, will tell her that now, of course, the baby's health will improve." Prose? Extremely unesthetic prose? But to her husband, the regenerated Pierre Bezukhov, this is supreme wisdom; his philosophic errands are ended; there is to him now no deeper philosophy than life; and his wife, the slatternly Natasha, is in his eyes the very symbol of life, of its sagacious fecundity and fertility. The passionate lover of life, he adores not only its fragrances, but also its smells.

In these years, the once slim Sophie Andreyevna has likewise broadened, has likewise transformed herself into a powerful female. She has borne two more children to Tolstoy, his sons Ilya and Leo. She is neither disheveled nor slatternly; but she, too, knows only two conditions,—she either is pregnant, or she is nursing. Is it not from her that the last transformation of Natasha—who formerly was Tanya—was painted? "To arrive at Natasha," Tolstoy will say in later years, "I have thrown together and dovetailed Tanya and Sophie . . ." And Pierre Bezukhov, Tolstoy's *alter ego*—does he not experience Tolstoy's own emotions?

Like a Biblical prophet, Tolstoy stands in life, stands firmly on the soil. In his steely, dagger-like eyes, there has appeared a quiet, smilingly thoughtful tranquillity which formerly was not in them. The long thick beard flying in the wind, the powerful figure in which there is new poise, balance, the cunning hands of a doer stuck under the belt . . . He stands among his children, and kinsfolk, and cows, and sheep, and calves, and undulating fields

and orchards; he fathers, accumulates, creates, drunk with that prosperity and fecundity which surrounds him, which is in him. Complete development, maturity and balance of all spiritual and physical powers; complete harmony with himself and with the world; the happy climax of life. If Michelangelo lived in the nineteenth century, he would hardly find a better original for his Moses. Indeed, such, probably, were those men who, before the coming of the Son, knew but little about venial sin and, in blessed simplicity, obeyed the command of the Heavenly Father, to create and procreate.

It is this that the novel reflects with unspoken power. By espousing "the little girl in the yellow dress," Tolstoy espoused life which he formerly panted for and feared to espouse. "War and Peace" is a child born of this union.

CHAPTER X

“LES PEUPLES HEUREUX N’ONT PAS D’HISTOIRE” (*continued*)

I

After “War and Peace” a period of painful reaction sets in: the seven-year-long effort proves to have been too great even for his Herculean strength. He is mentally drained, and his nerves are in a bad condition. Like an immoderate lover, he looks back on his great epic with disgust, almost shame. Sophie Andreyevna notes: “Lyovochka often says that all is finished for him, that soon death will come, that nothing gladdens him, and that he has nothing to expect from life any longer.” Indeed, some dark thoughts ripen in him. He reads various philosophic works, and it is especially in the pessimism of Schopenhauer that he finds a strange, morbid pleasure.

Like a sick animal, he turns to nature for a cure. “I am,” he writes to Foeth, “as stupid as a horse. I work, cut wood, mow, and do not give a thought to the disgusting li-t-erature and li-t-eratures.” And in winter he skates all day long with his children on one of Yasnaya’s frozen ponds and “learns to do all the tricks, backward and forward, on one leg and on both legs.” But this mind, ever boiling with activity, cannot rest. He plunges head-long into the study of playwrights of all times, from classics and French pseudo-classics to Shakespeare and Goethe, and himself considers plans of dramatic works. Then he abandons this and wholly surrenders to a new passion. He suddenly begins to learn the old Greek, masters it with amazing quickness and finds such delight as he alone is capable of experiencing in the reading of Greek authors. “How happy am I,” he writes to Foeth, “that God should have sent that whim to me! . . .” He always adored Homer; but, re-reading him now in the original, he is fired to the pitch of enthusiasm and decides “never again to write any such verbose trash as that ‘War and Peace.’”

Meanwhile, his nerves go from bad to worse. Recently, a perplexing thing happened. With the money derived from "War and Peace," he wants to buy one more estate. Learning that an estate belonging to Prince Golitzyn was for sale in a remote part of the province of Penza, he went to inspect it. A few days later, Sophie Andreyevna received an alarming letter from him:

"How are you and the children? Has anything happened to you? For two days I have been tortured with anxiety. Two days ago I stopped for the night at Arzamas [a small city], and something unusual came over me . . . Such anguish, fear and horror obsessed me as I have never felt before. Will tell with more details on my return . . . To what a degree I have grown into one with you and the children! I can remain alone when I am constantly busy, as on my trips to Moscow; but when I am free, I decidedly cannot bear solitude . . ."

On his return he told her that, on that horrible night, death was standing beside him, that he felt it with an almost physical clearness . . . Was this still the after "War and Peace" reaction, or something deeper and more serious?

Finally, at Sophie Andreyevna's demand, he goes for a cure to those Bashkir steppes which once, before his marriage, helped him so well. Touching letters pour into Yassnaya from there. Alarmed by his illness, Sophie Andreyevna thought at times, rather naïvely, that it came from the mental fatigue resulting from the study of the Greeks; he now writes to her:

"Your letters cause me more harm in any case than all of the Greeks taken together, by the emotion which they provoke in me. All the more so since they come in bundles, several at a time. I cannot read them without tears, and my heart palpitates, and I am all a-tremble. You write whatever comes to your mind, but every word is significant to me, and I constantly re-read them. . . . I am ready to cry just now, I love you so . . ."

Finally, this sad time is over. He is fully recovered.

II

Nine years ago Tolstoy noted: "I, the happy man, live and hear how the child kicks in Sonya's womb . . ." Now, in 1872, after the birth of Marie and Peter, they have six children. Tolstoy, the "apple tree," has an organic desire to spread his mighty boughs wider and wider, to see his offspring grow and prosper; children

acquire an ever-growing place and significance in his life; they are his "big joy."

He keeps away from the new-born ones: "As I cannot hold a live bird in my hands,—it gives me something like cramps,—so I cannot hold a little baby." But as soon as the inarticulate piece of flesh transforms itself into a little human being, Tolstoy's paternal passion awakens; he literally passes through a new romance with each new child.

Tolstoy devotes much of his attention to the education and bringing up of his children. In spite of the fact that he "gave up philosophizings" and became a "natural man," Tolstoy still is not free from his rationalistic whims; or, rather, his desire to be original and "not like others" in all things still remains with him. And this makes itself felt in his job as a father and educator. For instance, when Sophie Andreyevna, being ill, was unable to nurse one of the children and a wet nurse was taken, he was indignant and entered the nursery with a face expressing deep disgust: the mother must nurse her children herself. In this, however, he in no way disagreed with Sophie Andreyevna. She herself wept with jealousy when she saw her child at another woman's breast. "I love my children," she once noted, "to the degree of a painful passion." All toys are excluded from the children's rooms: Tolstoy's education is rationalistic. This rationalism sometimes leads to absurd situations. Time was when, not to "spoil" children and to make them wear "intelligent" clothes, he insisted that they should walk around in rather hideous, uniform gray flannel shirts; at the same time, he bought the most expensive imported linen for their underwear. Later, of course, he forgot these "philosophic gowns."

Some years ago he saw how an English governess was educating the children of Prince Lvov, a friend of his; he became enthusiastic about her system and orderliness, and found an English governess for his own children. At first it was a tragedy for Sophie Andreyevna, who did not speak a word of English and had to walk about with an English dictionary in hand.

As the children have reached school age, Tolstoy has to set up quite a domestic school at Yassnaya. Sophie Andreyevna teaches the youngest ones and supervises the older ones. But this, of course, is not enough. A few teachers and governors, carefully selected by Tolstoy (to select them, he rides time and

again to Moscow and Petersburg), reside permanently in Yassnaya, and the older children receive instruction in strictly established school-hours. Special attention is paid to foreign languages: English, French, German. Religion—the patriarchal Tolstoy does not doubt its necessity—is taught by a priest from Tula. Of course, Tolstoy directs everything: Sophie Andreyevna and the hired help are only the fulfillers of his program. He himself teaches too—now classical Greek, now mathematics. It is he, too, who takes care of their physical development, gymnastics, and sport, to which he attaches great importance. Of course, “good manners” are also an essential point: the little Tolstoyes grow with a very distinct idea in their minds that they are Counts Tolstoy.

Tolstoy never pets his children; yet the fascination of his manly grasp on their little souls is so great that they boundlessly adore, respect, and cling to him. He does not need to punish them. “Whenever he wanted us to do something,” Count Ilya will write in his reminiscences, “he only looked at us with attention, and his glance impressed us more strongly than any order.” It is because of this same dagger-like glance that “to lie to father was impossible: when he looked at us he knew everything.”

It is impossible to convey the amount of humor, healthy joy and energy which Tolstoy injects into the life of the whole family. Count Leo will record many instances. Some tiresome guests have bored everybody. No sooner do they leave than Tolstoy jumps up and, lifting one hand above his head and waving it, begins to gallop full speed around the table; Sophie Andreyevna and the children, one by one, join him, and thus all gallop with wild shouts and still wilder laughter to complete exhaustion. Tolstoy calls it “the dance of the Numidian riders.”

Life, generally speaking, flows with mellow joy and merriment at Yassnaya. In summer, the house is always full of guests and relatives. The faithful Dyakov and the Foeths, Tanya Behrs, who now, married and also a mother, is Tatyana Andreyevna Kuzminsky, arrive; Countess Marie Nicholayevna with her daughters, and Count Serge Nicholayevich also come from their estates. From twenty to thirty people meet at dinner. And to festivities, horseback-riding parties, etc., there is no end. For instance, Mme. Kuzminsky will describe in her reminiscences a celebration of Sophie Andreyevna’s name-day:

“September 29 came. All, including myself, were in a holiday



COUNTESS SOPHIE ANDREYEVNA TOLSTOY

A photograph of 1881

mood. We all were dressed up, in light white dresses, with flowers and ribbons. The dining table was adorned with flowers, and the new terrace lit with the sun. I remember how noisily and merrily we were sitting to table at five o'clock. Suddenly, the sounds of an orchestra reached us from the alleys of the park. It was playing the overture from 'Fenella,' '*La muette de Portici*,' of which Sophie was so fond. We all, except Sophie, knew that Leo Nicholayevich, had asked the colonel [of a regiment stationed near-by] to send up his band, but this was kept secret from Sophie. I cannot describe the expression of Sophie's face! Everything was in it—astonishment, the fear that it was a dream, thankfulness . . . Leo Nicholayevich beamed as much as she . . ."

And here is a Christmas Eve. The family and the guests assembled in the large hall are intrigued by the sudden appearance of a masked group representing a peasant with two bears and a she-goat. Great is the general amusement when the peasant, unmasked, proves to be Dyakov, and the two bears—Islenyev and Countess Marie Nicholayevna's son; but the delight and laughter reach their climax when from the costume of the limping she-goat emerges—Tolstoy.

"Les peuples heureux n'ont pas d'histoire." Indeed, the golden age of Tolstoy's happiness, more exuberant than before, continues. In his letters to the Countess Alexandra, he constantly repeats: "Greater happiness there cannot be." It is true that silver threads begin to sparkle in his beard. But what does it matter? The beginning of the fall is only richer in fruit and color than the first part of the summer.

Lately, Tolstoy has found some new friends. One of them is Nicholas Nicholayevich Strakhov, that very critic and thinker whose opinion on "War and Peace" we have quoted. Thin, spectacled, with a long gray beard, he looks stern and professional but at bottom he is a very kind, intelligent and cordial man. Tolstoy values his opinions highly and henceforth makes him his constant mental confidant. As for Strakhov, he literally becomes enamored with Tolstoy. "Some light spirit emanates from you, as it emanates from all your works, and when I remember a contact with you, this spirit comforts me as that model for which one ought to strive in life . . . What a joy in life you are to me!" Indeed, he is "a joy in life" not only to Strakhov. One of the other new friends is Prince Dimitry Leonidovich Urussov, the

vice-governor of the province of Tula. Tolstoy is very fond of this big, noble, silent man of a religiously philosophic turn of mind. Urussov is—purely Platonically—in love with Sophie Andreyevna; Tolstoy does not mind even that (although, when he sees the court paid her by others, his “troglodytish,” and, of course, unfounded, jealousy flairs up as before).

During these years Yassnaya has changed. In the course of the last century it has, generally speaking, passed through a series of typical transformations. Under Prince Volkonsky, Leo Nikolayevich's grandfather, it was pompous and sumptuous; suffice it to say that an orchestra of specially trained serfs played for the prince when he strolled in the alleys of the park. Under Tolstoy's father it became much simpler, although it still retained some of its eighteenth century stateliness. After Tolstoy gambled away the large house and settled in the side-building, it became a typical home of a Russian nobleman in moderate circumstances: simple furniture made chiefly by domestic carpenters, the unchecked growth of grass around the house in which servants eventually would throw out garbage. There remained little more than ancestral portraits to remind one of the glory of the olden days . . . Sophie Andreyevna, marrying Tolstoy, was rather astonished by this excessive simplicity. Under her practical management, the manor quickly began to improve. A croquet-ground and a tennis-court appeared. A new wing was added to the house. Untidy servants were replaced by lackeys in white knitted gloves. Now refined simplicity and solid comfort reign in Yassnaya. At first, with his whimsical love for “naturalness,” Tolstoy objected to her reforms. But afterwards he approved of them.

He appreciates material well-being more and more. Pursuing his sturdy acquisitional effort, he buys a large new estate in the province of Samara, near Volga, and devotes much of his time to its management.

III

After “War and Peace” Tolstoy's pedagogical passion has re-awakened, perhaps under the influence of daily contact with his own children. He re-opens the long-since-forgotten school for peasant children. He teaches in it himself and sometimes, with his talent of conveying his enthusiasm to others, makes the whole family, including little Serge and Ilya, help him and work with

the peasant boys. Moreover, he has accepted the position of inspector of schools in his district. And he writes to the Countess Alexandra: "As fourteen years ago, I am filled with love for these thousands of children with whom I am dealing . . . I do not reason, but when I enter a school and see the crowd of these dirty, tattered, thin lads with light eyes and—how often!—angelic faces, I am seized with fear and anxiety, as though I were beholding drowning people: Lord, how to save them, and whom to save first! What is drowned is what is most valuable—it is that spiritual element which is so strongly expressed in children . . ."

But Tolstoy is especially interested in the theoretical part of pedagogics. He publishes in a periodical an article containing a scathing attack on the generally accepted pedagogical methods, and he again upholds in it his own pedagogical principles with which we are already familiar: the "free school," the education through children's free will, etc. This time the popularity of the greatest Russian writer stands behind his name, and his article raises a storm of discussion. Plunging into it with all his passion, he rides to Petersburg and Moscow, speaks at various conferences, etc. Moreover, he has long been working on "The Alphabet," a school-book for children in four parts containing all school-subjects and a great deal of material for children's reading. As he writes to Countess Alexandra he attaches such importance to this work of his that, "after having written it, I will have the right to die in peace." To his great disappointment, "The Alphabet" when it appears, meets with very cruel criticism from learned pedagogues who advise "our great novelist"—to write *only* novels. But he re-works the book, and, then, it meets with unexpected triumph: it sells in hundreds of thousands of copies. No wonder. "The Alphabet" is really a unique work; Tolstoy has really succeeded in approaching and grasping the child's mind in a truly unprecedented way. But even now his pedagogical enthusiasm is not exhausted: he dreams of founding a whole "bare-footed," that is to say a peasants', university at Yassnaya.

At first, Sophie Andreyevna tolerated her husband's pedagogical fever; but then she began to dislike it intensely. This was perhaps the first serious disagreement between them. "Lyovochka," she wrote, "has become immersed up to the neck in public education, schools, seminaries for teachers, etc., and all this occupies

him from morning till evening. I look at it with astonishment, and I deplore his energy which is being spent on this, and not on literature. As for the usefulness of it all, I am skeptical about it, for this activity is contained within the boundaries of our Krapivensky district, which is such a small corner of Russia." Her attitude, indeed, is quite definite: he is an artist, that she respects with all her soul; "as for these alphabets, arithmetics and grammars, I despise them, and I cannot feign to sympathize with them." Soon, however, he gets over this passion.

It is interesting to note this: although he is an enthusiastic exponent of "free education," Tolstoy does not apply this principle to his own children: they know very well that they *have* to study. Moreover, the admirer of the "angelic faces" of peasant lads, he strictly forbids his sons to play with these lads in the village. Tolstoys must be Tolstoys.

During these years, great changes have taken place in Russia. The emancipation of the serfs was followed by Emperor Alexander II's other reforms: new courts of justice, with trial by jury, replaced the antiquated judiciary; Zemstvos, that is to say, electoral organs of provincial self-government, were introduced, etc.; among the modernized nobles, there is a great idealistic eagerness to participate in this new public life. Tolstoy scornfully disapproves of it and keeps away from it; he continues to see in liberalism a European "falsehood" which cannot strike roots in Russia. Is this the conservatism of a provincial aristocrat, or the old urge to disagree with generally accepted opinions, to be "not like others"? Both, apparently. But, in strange contradiction to this conservatism, his old anarchical tendency has become especially stressed, too. In general, he disapproves of *any* Government; and only recently, for a time, he thought of founding "the society of men who do not serve the Government." This is typical. Tolstoy and the whole sunny little world of Yassnaya continues to live, as it were, outside of all epochs and boundaries; he is by himself. But, alongside of that, he continues to love the Russian peasant with a truly organic love. Once, for instance, he organizes horse-races for the local population on his Samara estate; thousands of people gather on his land and are his guests for two days. He writes: ". . . Years ago, I heard speeches in the British parliament (this is considered to be so important), and was bored by the pettiness of it all; while here—flies, dirt, peasants,

Bashkirs, and yet I looked and listened with the greatest respect and was afraid to miss anything, and felt that it was all very important."

Arriving at this estate at another time, in the summer of 1873, he finds the whole Volga region stricken by drought: a terrific famine awaits the population. At first, strangely enough, he does not notice it. But, urged by Sophie Andreyevna, he carries on an investigation and becomes fully aware of the proportions of the forthcoming calamity. He forgets his own heavy financial losses, forgets everything and is seized by one idea—to help, to save. He publishes an alarming letter in *The Moscow News*; he writes to Countess Alexandra asking her to draw the attention of the Empress to the calamity; putting aside his contempt for "public work," he himself makes large donations, stirs up the local nobility, the local institutions: "Beholding the sufferings of these men, it is painful, it is shameful to be a human being . . ." By his appeals Russia is stirred. Donations pour; soon two million roubles are raised, and the Government begins to act to avert the misfortune.

Incidentally, an amusing thing happens this year on Tolstoy's return to Yassnaya. I. Kramskoy, a famous artist, awaits him there: Tretyakovsky Gallery (a museum) in Moscow has commissioned him to paint the portrait of the author of "War and Peace." Tolstoy is indignant at the very idea of such "unseemly" publicity; his portrait to hang in a museum? He is not Nebuchadnezzar. And he blurts out a categorical "No" to all the artist's entreaties. Poor Kramskoy loses all hope and is about to leave when a felicitous argument occurs to him.

"I respect the reasons for which your Excellency refuses too much to insist any more," he says. "But your portrait will be in the Gallery anyhow."

"What do you mean?"

"This. Neither I, nor any other of my contemporaries will make it; but in thirty, forty, or fifty years it will be made in any case; and what a pity it will be that it will not have been made from the living original!"

Tolstoy thinks; his resistance is broken; he permits Kramskoy to go ahead with his work, but only on one condition: he will have to make two identical portraits—one for the Gallery, and the other for his, Tolstoy's, children . . .

him from morning till evening. I look at it with astonishment, and I deplore his energy which is being spent on this, and not on literature. As for the usefulness of it all, I am skeptical about it, for this activity is contained within the boundaries of our Krapivensky district, which is such a small corner of Russia." Her attitude, indeed, is quite definite: he is an artist, that she respects with all her soul; "as for these alphabets, arithmetics and grammars, I despise them, and I cannot feign to sympathize with them." Soon, however, he gets over this passion.

It is interesting to note this: although he is an enthusiastic exponent of "free education," Tolstoy does not apply this principle to his own children: they know very well that they *have* to study. Moreover, the admirer of the "angelic faces" of peasant lads, he strictly forbids his sons to play with these lads in the village. Tolstoys must be Tolstoys.

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This is Tolstoy's first portrait; it will remain his best portrait, too. All the peculiar elements forming Tolstoy's personality: the lordly, "troglodytish" nobility, the unusual power of creative instinct, kindness, straightforwardness, the unbending, obstinate will and the potential storms floating around the calm, all-seeing eyes—all this Kramskoy has drawn in the brutish face with a remarkable clarity.

IV

Tolstoy's after-"War-and-Peace" disgust with creative writing has passed off long ago. He wrote to Foeth, comparing himself to a tree: "The sap breaks through the bark and begins to run, and I put the cup to receive it. Is it good or bad sap? What difference does it make? It is such a joy to be delivered of it, on these wonderful autumn and winter nights . . ."

Several subjects competed in his mind. He thought of writing "The Decembrists." Then the idea of a contemporary psychological novel occurred to him. It would be "the story of a married society-woman" who falls in love with another man, abandons her husband, and finally perishes. There was even a moment when he told Sophie Andreyevna that "everything was clear to him" and that he was about to begin. But then his definite choice fell on yet another subject which had also interested him for a long time.

"The Hundred Years"—for such would be the title of the new work—would again be a long historical novel; it would deal with the epoch of Peter the Great (1689 to 1725). The subject was indeed exceptionally interesting. To incarnate in artistic images that colossal cultural revolution by which the titanic Emperor "Europeanized" the little half-Asiatic Czardom of Moscovy and transformed it into the imposing Empire of Russia—what problem could offer more allure to an artist of Tolstoy's scope? "What an epoch for an artist!" he would write to Strakhov some time later. "Whatever one glances at, problems and riddles arise. And they can be solved only by artistic methods. The very problem of Russia's national life lies here . . ." Let it be added that he also had an interesting tie of blood-relationship with that epoch: his direct ancestor, the famous, talented and cruel Count Peter Tolstoy, was one of the Emperor's leading statesmen.

But a painful disappointment awaited Tolstoy. He worked strenuously on "The Hundred Years" for a year and a half (up to

the beginning of 1873); carried out "a deep preliminary plowing of the soil," that is to say, studied meticulously hundreds of documents, histories, source-books. Finally, he began to write, and actually wrote a series of beginnings, various scenes and even complete chapters. And, after having done all that, he came to the conclusion that he had to give up the whole thing, that his time and effort had been wasted.

Why? The epoch was too remote for him to handle. "It was difficult for me to penetrate into the souls of those men, so unlike us were they."

That was his explanation. Yet the unfinished fragments of his novel, published after his death, prove that he did overcome this difficulty. These excerpts resuscitate, with supreme vividness, "the breath of history" and the brutal spirit of Peter's time. Moreover, artistically, they represent Tolstoy at his best. The abandonment of the novel was caused merely by some strange attack of neurasthenia, coupled, of course, with his usual baffling lack of creative self-confidence. One reads through these fragments with acute irritation, guessing regretfully at the stupendous grandeur of a masterpiece which, because of a whim, remained unborn.

The fact was, however, that Tolstoy was discouraged. "My work goes badly. Life is so beautiful, light, and short, and its portrayal always so long, hideous, heavy," he wrote to Countess Alexandra.

And then, on a spring day of 1873, he happens to open a volume of "Byelkin's Tales," short stories by Pushkin, Russia's great poet. He re-reads a long-since-familiar page and is fascinated by it: "What a marvel! That's how one must begin a story! Pushkin takes the bull by the horns . . . He ushers the reader right into the midst of action."

And, suddenly, his decision is taken: he forsakes "The Hundred Years," comes back to the abandoned subject of "the married society-woman," and, shutting himself in his study, immediately begins to write it.

The novel thus called to life by a stray volume of "Byelkin's Tales" is "Anna Karenina."

Learning that Count Tolstoy is writing a new novel, the editors of Russian monthlies offer him "unheard-of" prices for it, running as high as 10,000 roubles plus 500 roubles per printed sheet. Finally, it is again to Katkov's *Russian Messenger* that Tolstoy sells it. And it appears in instalments, in the years 1875, 1876 and 1877. In book form, it will come out in 1878.

He wrote the first draft of "Anna Karenina" in about two months, with an ease that was unusual for him. But then the exacting craftsman spent three years re-working and re-writing it, while it was appearing. Again, as in the days of "War and Peace," there were times when he worked "with enthusiasm and with tears." And again Sophie Andreyevna, "the faithful nurse of her husband's talent," after the day of unceasing domestic work, spent long hours in the night copying and re-copying his endlessly corrected manuscripts; or, meeting him at the late supper of cold meats and wine, heard and discussed with him his plans for the coming chapters. But there were other times, too. All did not go as smoothly as with "War and Peace." There were times when, utterly disgusted with his work, Tolstoy suffocated, felt that he was unable to continue. He wrote, for instance, to Strakhov:

"... There lie on my desk the proofs of the April instalment of the novel, and I fear that I will have no strength to correct them. All is bad in them, as well as in the parts that already appeared, all must be re-worked, stricken out and thrown away, and I must renounce it and say: 'Excuse me, I won't behave like that any more; instead, I will try to write something new, less irrelevant and less neither-fish-nor-fleshish.' This is how I feel, and this is very painful. Pray, do not praise my novel. Pascal wore a belt with nails which he pressed whenever he felt that praise gave him joy; that's the kind of belt I need . . . And if it is true that, as I feel it, I am losing my artistic strength, please tell me so frankly. Dirty is our, the writer's, job,—dirty, demoralizing. Every writer has a clique of praisers of his own, . . . and this prevents him from seeing clearly the beginning of his decline. I should not like to continue in my mistakes and demoralization. Pray, help me in this. And do not let yourself be checked by the idea that your severe criticism can put an end

to the writings of a man who, once upon a time, had talent . . .”

Perhaps, had it not been for the constant soothing and comforting which he received from the faithful Strakhov, from Foeth and, especially from Sophie Andreyevna, he might actually have thrown the whole novel to the winds.

Meanwhile, ignorant of the mood of its author, the public raged with enthusiasm over the appearance of “Anna Karenina’s” every instalment. Indeed, if there could be a greater literary triumph than that of “War and Peace,” it was that of “Anna Karenina.” The novel made an epoch. From the Winter Palace and the Empress’ salon to the poor *monsarde* of a university-student, it was being absorbed by all. “Turgenev’s friends,” a contemporary wrote, “are in despair that his ‘Virgin Soil’ should have appeared at the same time, for no one notices it.” As for the critics . . . Foeth, the most severe and exacting of them (it is for this reason that Tolstoy so values his opinion) wrote to Tolstoy: “. . . There are in ‘Anna’ some not very interesting passages. One may object: ‘They are needed as connecting links.’ I will answer: ‘This is none of my business.’ But I know this: the whole, and the workmanship of details, are pure gold . . .” As for Dostoevsky, he ran about in Petersburg “waving his hands and calling Tolstoy ‘the God of art.’” Moreover, he devoted a series of articles to “Anna,” and in one of them he wrote: “This novel is unprecedented, incomparable. Who of our writers can compare with Tolstoy? And in Europe—who ever wrote anything that could approach it?”

Indeed, higher than that no literary fame could rise.

VI

“Anna Karenina” is the second summit of Tolstoy’s genius. The main peculiarities of his art have remained the same as they were at the epoch of “War and Peace”; to sum them up would be merely to repeat what we have already said. However, the impression left with one by “Anna” is different from that which one retains from the earlier masterpiece. It is but half the length of “War and Peace” (that is to say, about 1,300 pages). While the great epic was, so to speak, eccentric, “Anna” is centralized around two dramatic plots that run parallel to each other—the romance of Anna with Count Vronsky and of Levin with Princess Kitty Scherbatzky (the other plots contained in it are subsidiary).

Its effect, therefore, is more dramatically compact and concentrated, but less broad. But still it remains sufficiently inclusive; suffice it to say that about one hundred and seventy characters, including the secondary ones, figure in the novel. Tolstoy may have conceived "Anna" as merely "the story of a woman," but he expanded it far beyond this theme while carrying it out. Anna's story is pre-dominant, no doubt; but, converging to it as to a center, an enormous variety of events and situations develops; Government ministers, officers, peasants, balls, fashionable horse races, domestic scandals, noblemen's congresses,—all are to be found in the novel. The result is that it presents a panorama of the then contemporary Russia, of the Russia of the seventies, as detailed and inclusive as "War and Peace" was of the Russia of Napoleonic days. Many of the political, social, religious and other issues then animating the country are brought out in it. Thus, it is Tolstoy's first work after "Sebastopol Stories" which deals with subjects of current actuality; and this is one of the reasons why the passions aroused by its triumph are so heated.

The veins of reality running through the novel and attaching it to actual life are again numerous. The charming and unfortunate Anna herself was portrayed—not in life-story, not in her character, but merely as a human form—after one Mme. Hartung, Pushkin's daughter, whom Tolstoy had met at a reception in Tula and whose aristocratic, sensuous beauty deeply impressed him: both ladies have the same dark curls at the nape of the neck, the same beautiful, massive figure, carried with light, energetic grace.

"Byelkin's Tales" and Mme. Hartung, the great poet's book and his daughter, cooperated in the creation of "Anna." The story of Anna's passion which, let it be noted, is, artistically and psychologically, a marvel of marvels surpassed by nothing in modern literature, is, as far as we know, imaginative; but its tragic ending, that moment of despair in which Anna hurls herself under the wheels of the rattling train, is not. While Tolstoy was still working on the novel of Peter the Great, one Anna Zykov, the mistress of a neighboring country squire, committed suicide in such a way; Tolstoy rode to the station of Yassenki, where the tragedy occurred, and which is but a few miles distant from Yassnaya, and looked long at her mutilated body.

But the basis of reality in the character of Levin is especially close-knit: even more than Pierre Bezukhov in "War and Peace,"

he is Tolstoy's self-portrait, or, rather, the portrait of certain phases of his self. From his enormous physical strength and his bushy beard to his tireless seeking after truth and God, from his peculiar mixture of "peasantism" with aristocratic contempt of things liberal, to his kindness, crankiness and unbalanced temper, all is familiar to us in Levin. Indeed, in later years, Sophie Andreyevna will often jest: "Lyovochka, you are Levin, plus talent; and Levin is an unbearable fellow!" But it is not only Levin's character that is familiar to us. His whole romance with Kitty Scherbatzky; the scene during which, suffocating with emotion, he writes to her in initials, with chalk, on a card-table, his confused avowal of his love; the characteristic scenes of their married life (including the idiotic, pathetic scenes of jealousy) and, finally, the mysterious and memorable night of the birth of their first child (incidentally, Tolstoy is the first novelist who dared to depict childbirth, and has done it with such power and philosophic depth that the subject seems to be exhausted)—what is it all if not autobiography, if not the resuscitation by the aging Yassnopolyanian patriarch of the honeymoon of his own happiness? Generally speaking, the solid poetry of the family and the construction of the whole novel "by families" is as typical of "Anna" as it was of "War and Peace"; and it is in this mood that the main autobiographical vein of the novel lies. Translations from actual life might be traced also in numerous secondary characters of "Anna"; many of Tolstoy's friends identified themselves in it, and many jests were passed between him and them on this subject.

Powerful is the fountain of life and color pulsating in "Anna"; as powerful, indeed, or, in places, even more powerful, than in Tolstoy's preceding works. Again, one is tempted to say that Tolstoy's imaginary world is visually more convincing than the world we live in. Pages like those containing the description of the fluctuations of the youthful Kitty's silk-and-satin soul and body at a ball in Moscow; or of Vronsky taking barriers at an officers' steeplechase and of his muscular and spiritual cooperation with his horse, engage not only the reader's mind, but also—literally—his flesh and skin, with that intensity of sensual delight which only Tolstoy's manly, strictly simple, often clumsy words possess the divine mastery of conveying.

Thus Tolstoy's pages again sing an anthem to life.

But however impressive they may be, these sounds do not dominate in "Anna" as they dominated in "War and Peace." The novel is tuned to a different, otherwise significant, key.

It is true that Levin finds that which he was seeking: his marriage and happy family life, the feeling that there *is* a God, although an unfathomable and unintelligible God, have morally adjusted him to his existence. Yet one has the impression that this is but a breathing spell. Indeed, does not Levin feel that he has found sophistries instead of the absolute truth for which he was panting? And will not these sophistries crumble one day?

But let us go further. The kind, good, intelligent Anna perishes. Why? Because, after a desperate struggle, she gives in, flings away all conventionalities, deserts her husband and son and becomes Vronsky's mistress? No, this would be too primitive—her tragedy lies deeper. Passion supported by no moral skeleton proves to be an inescapable instrument of destruction to its bearer. Imperceptibly, like some infernal fire, it desolates poor Anna's soul and transforms her into a monomaniac. Her remorse over the desertion of her son, the constantly growing feeling that Vronsky's attraction to her is cooling, the hideous scenes of jealousy resulting from it—all this leads to the catastrophe with a truly Hellenic ineluctability, and is drawn by Tolstoy with an insight into the springs of human action that make the whole picture a marvel of art. And it is for the sake of her passion that she hurls herself under the train: if she cannot retain Vronsky's love, she at least will make him suffer and repent! All of this tragedy seems, in its abstract essence, equivalent to the condemnation of that instinctive, sensual life which beats so insistently on many pages of the novel. But Tolstoy does not seem to condemn; he seems to understand and pity.

But let us go still further and glance from a perspective, at the whole canvas. It is perhaps even more Homerically aloof in tone than "War and Peace"; nor is there anything of a "satire" in it; yet a striking insight into the vanity and meagerness of man's life arises from it. It seems to peer deep into all human words, conventions, deeds, poses, institutions, and to detect behind them the lie and the deceit—the eternal lie of our pseudo-Christian civilization, the pompous paper-comedy of ministerial offices, the

inevitable deceit of conjugal bed-rooms, the pretentious hypocrisy of liberal and humanitarian phrases.

What is the meaning of it all? Tolstoy himself refused to answer this question. "If," he wrote to Strakhov, "I wanted to sum up that which I tried to express in my novel, I would have to write another novel, and it would be precisely the novel I have written. . . . Every thought expressed in words loses its sense, becomes hopelessly cheapened, if it is amputated from that whole of which it is a link." Indeed, to tell the idea of a work of art "in one's own words" means almost always to make a fool out of the artist.

This much however can be said. Gone from "Anna" is the golden harmony of "War and Peace." The atmosphere of philosophic anxiety, of spiritual conflict, floats over it. The relatively abstracted author seems to pant for the alluring brightness of things earthly, and, at the same time, painfully to feel their vanity. Nor is the God standing over "Anna"'s universe the full-blooded Biblical or pagan Father and Creator. He is rather the Christian God of endless moral severity, but also of endless forgiveness and pity. "To me the vengeance, and I shall reward"—these mysterious words of the Savior are to be found on the first page of "Anna" as a motto to it; and not only Anna's fate, but the whole colossal human comedy of the novel is tuned to them.

In one of his articles on "Anna," Dostoevsky wrote: ". . . The evil existed before men. Caught into the whirlwind of life, men commit crimes and perish ineluctably . . . No triumph of 'democratic elements,' no annihilation of poverty, no organization of labor can save mankind from this abnormality, and, consequently, from sin and crime. Tolstoy has expressed it in a tremendous investigation of human soul, with a frightening depth and power, with a hitherto unprecedented realism of artistic expression. It is evident to perfect clearness that evil is rooted in man deeper than our Socialistic healers believe, that no organization of society can do away with the evil, that man's soul always will remain the same, that perversity and sin grow out of it itself and that, finally, the laws of human spirit are as yet so entirely unknown and mysterious, that there can be neither real healers, nor *final* judges, and that there is but He who says: "To me the vengeance, and I shall reward . . ." As for the human judge, he must know that

he is not a final judge, that he himself is a sinner, that the scale and sword in his hands will be a monstrosity unless, holding the scale and the sword, he bows his head before the law of the as yet unfathomable mystery, and resorts to the only solution open to him—to clemency and love . . .”

Indeed, the whole novel, bodily, material as it is, seems to drift into some strange and striking moral altitude.

Let it be added that this spirit was not the spirit of the day in Russia, where the adoration of “progress” and the militant materialistic radicalism still reigned. Thus, Tolstoy once more rose against the generally accepted ideas. As we know, he carried away the public. But, as in the days of “War and Peace,” radical critics hissed “Anna” with utmost irritation and anger and stopped at no words to condemn “Count Tolstoy’s reactionary attitude.”

CHAPTER XI

FLEEING FROM THE DRAGON

I

And Tolstoy? We have not seen him for four years. Where is he now, "morally speaking"?

Shielded from the world by the triumph of his novel, during these years he passed through an inner crisis so profound and momentous that now an entirely new stage of his biography is begun.

Tolstoy's happiness was at its zenith. As in a fairy-tale, Nature and fate fulfilled his every wish, bestowed upon him all of their blessings. "I had a kind, loving and beloved wife, good children and a large fortune which of itself grew and increased. I was respected by kinsfolk and friends . . . and praised by strangers, and, without undue pride, could believe that my name was honored." Modest words; in reality his name was surrounded by such fame as few Russians have ever achieved. Moreover, he had iron health and strength, a unique position in society, a divine creative genius.

But it was exactly now, in these days of zenith, that spells of sadness, or, as he himself puts it, "moments of astonishment" during which "life suddenly seemed to stop," began to come over him. These moments came when he thought about death.

Tolstoy is fearless; until his very last day he would stand under fire with the same thrill of manly joy as he stood under it in Sebastopol. But, strangely, there always existed in his mind a very definite sore spot centering around the *idea* of death. We remember what a terrific impression Count Nicholas's death made on him. We had occasion to observe how often he thought of that "hole into the next world." And, in the first years of his married life, death sometimes came to him not in the form of a thought, but in the form of a strikingly evident, spontaneous

feeling. He lay in bed at night, "in that intermediary state of mind between sleep and waking during which the external bustle of life vanishes and the soul (let them find a better word . . .) speaks more clearly"; suddenly, something would squeeze his heart: "I am rolling down-hill toward death, and I hardly have strength to stop. But I do not want death, I want and love immortality . . ."

Now, however, his thoughts of death were of a different nature. For twelve happy married years, his mighty instincts were greedily drinking from the cup of life, and no philosophizing could interfere with the thirsty gulping of his throat. But now he was forty-four, forty-five. He was at the climax of his physical and spiritual powers; but, as though beginning to awaken after a happy dream, he looked around. He was at the climax; and what would come after? Imperceptibly, the best part of life floated by; inevitable decline, illnesses, death, loomed ahead. Deaths of acquaintances or friends plunged him into gloom. Returning from Mme. Dyakov's funeral, he wrote to Countess Alexandra: ". . . There are times when one forgets about it,—about death. But there are others, like this year, when one sits with the dear ones as though in hiding; one fears even to think of their fate . . ."

During his married years Tolstoy definitely lost his religious faith; the question of the hereafter stood unanswered before him.

". . . And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man . . ."

Indeed, the patriarch of Yasnaya was often seized with this mood of the Ecclesiast's. Death—where does this "opening" lead? And what is the sense of all this happy life? His piercing eyes, frowning, scrutinized the unknown. Perhaps it is for this reason that, a few years ago, he absorbed Schopenhauer and Kant with such attention. And he would write to Foeth: ". . . One should speak about nirvana neither with jests, nor anger. To all of us, or at least to me, it is far more interesting than life."

But he waved these questions aside: "The moment I concentrate on them properly, I will answer them without difficulty," he told himself. Besides, these moods did not come often. It was during these years that he surrendered to his pedagogical passion, worked on his Volga estate, limped, disguised as a she-

goat at the Christmas festivals, and galloped recklessly on young horses, which he dearly loved to break to harness.

II

In November of 1873—the first year of “Anna Karenina,” coming as a thunderbolt from a clear sky, death, not imaginary this time, but very real, paid a brisk visit to Yassnaya: after a short illness Petya, the big, healthy and plump, youngest son of the Tolstoy, died.

Hitherto the family had been “frighteningly prosperous”—it knew no serious illnesses, no losses. Besides, Petya had been Sophie Andreyevna’s favorite; she made heroic attempts to bear her grief with courage, but she was crushed, suffered violently.

But this was only the beginning.

A half year later, Tolstoy walked through the village after a second coffin. This time it was the eighty-year-old Mlle. Yergolsky, that very Mlle. Yergolsky who, in his youth, had been the *locum tenans* of his mother, with whom such endless and dear reminiscences were linked. This was a heavy blow. “I spent all my life with her; I fear to live without her . . .”

Another half-year passed, and Yassnaya was again plunged into grief: after three weeks of atrocious sufferings, with his head hideously swollen from dropsy, little Nicholas, the boy who had been born after Petya, died also.

At the end of the same year, 1875, Sophie Andreyevna, again pregnant, contracted whooping-cough from her older children, gave premature birth to a daughter who lived only a few hours, and stricken with peritonitis, lay herself for long days on the threshold of the next world. When acute danger was over, Foeth received from Tolstoy a note containing a real shriek of despair: “Fear, horror, death, the merriment of children, eating, bustling, doctors, falsehood, death, horror. Oh, how painful it was! . . .”

Finally, Sophie Andreyevna was recovering (although at least a year and a half would pass before her complete recovery); yet, at that moment fate gave a finishing touch to its ravages at Yassnaya: Mme. Yushkov, that aunt of Leo Nicholayevich in whose house at Kazan he spent his university years and who was now living with Tolstoy, fell ill and also died after a desperate struggle.

Five coffins in two years, and at such a critical period of Tolstoy’s life!

"... Then I looked at all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit from them under the sun . . ." These words, indeed, might serve as a motto to that which followed.

It was during these years that the first symptoms of Tolstoy's "inner disease," his sad thoughts and "moments of astonishment," "fused, like dots always falling on the same spot, into one black blot," into one "continuous suffering."

I live—"What for? And what then?" This question drilled his mind until he could no longer hide the answer from himself. Everything was clear: We live just in order to die; the only sense of life is that it is "a complete senselessness" ending invariably in "putrefaction and worms."

It is normal for millions of people not believing in paradise or hell to live with this knowledge and yet remain happy. But the great sensualists Buddha and the Ecclesiast could not. Neither could the Russian gentleman Tolstoy who certainly would not tolerate any one to infringe upon his property,—be it his estates or his eternal happiness. His reaction to his "discovery" was terrific.

What? "Worms?" Only this and nothing more? He was, as it were, rubbing his eyes, re-awakening more and more completely after his happy sleep of twelve years. "How is it that I did not know it before?" His whole life suddenly opened up before him in a new light. "For thirty or forty years," he "lived, advanced; studying, developing, growing in body and spirit," reached finally "that summit of life from which all of it is seen," and now, as the bandage from his eyes is fallen, he stands, like a "miserable, duped fool," seeing that he labored in vain, that life is but a gilded, vanishing illusion, and that ahead of him there is nothing but "an abyss" with "putrefaction and worms"! Meanwhile, the coffins and the smell of medicaments in the family seemed to confirm his feeling with concrete examples.

His happiness was not only poisoned. It had transformed itself into a constant source of anguish.

"... In the midst of my country-squirish affairs, which at that time greatly interested me, suddenly the thought would occur: 'Suppose that thou wilt have 6,000 *dessyatinas* in the Samara prov-

ince and a drove of 300 horses; and then what?" And, bewildered, I did not know what to think further. Or, beginning to think of how I would educate my children, I asked myself: "What for?" . . . Or else, thinking of the fame which my works would give me, I said to myself: "Well, thou wilt be more famous than Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Molière, than all the writers in the world; but to what purpose? . . ." To end in extinction, "worms"? It was, by the way, for this reason that he worked on his novel, begun in an entirely different mood, with such untold difficulty and that he was about to give it up. He felt as though "some one" deceived him "cruelly and stupidly." He was life's deceived lover. And the more barbarous was his passion for all these earthly things, the more violent was now his anguish.

He made heroic efforts to struggle, to chase away these thoughts, to live as he lived before. He wanted, he wrote to Countess Alexandra, to silence "the devil who winks malignantly and keeps repeating that all we are doing is lashing waves." As though fleeing from himself, he invented scores of occupations, worked with frenzy, disappeared for entire days in the forest so that Sophie Andreyevna hardly ever saw him. To-day he was gloomy and silent, and to-morrow, apparently through an effort of will-power, again merry and energetic as in former years. He battled, resisted, tried to rise. This went on for months. Then he succumbed.

Late in October 1875, on the eve of her grave illness, Sophie Andreyevna noted in her diary:

" . . . It pains me, I cannot see him such as he has become. Dejected, drooping, he passively sits for entire days and weeks without work, without joy, without energy, and he seems to have reconciled himself to that condition. This is like moral death; I do not want to see it in him, nor can he himself go on living like that. . . ."

He was overcome. Later, in his "Confession," he described what he went through in these days of prostration:

"There is an Oriental fable . . . of a traveler overtaken in a desert by an enraged beast. Fleeing from this beast, he gets into a dry well, but sees at the bottom of it a dragon that has opened its jaw to devour him. The poor wretch . . . seizes a twig growing in a crack in the wall and clings to it. His arms are growing weaker, and he feels he will soon have to surrender to the peril

awaiting him above or below. He still clings on, but he sees that two mice, one black and the other white, go regularly round and round the stem of the twig to which he is clinging, and gnaw at it. Soon the twig itself will snap, and he will fall into the dragon's jaw. The traveler sees this and knows that he will inevitably perish; yet, while still hanging, he finds drops of honey on the leaves of the twig, reaches them with his tongue and licks them.—So I, too, clung to the boughs of life knowing that the dragon of death was inevitably awaiting me, ready to tear me to pieces, and I could not understand why I was doomed to this torment. And I was trying to lick the honey which formerly consoled me; but the honey no longer gave me pleasure, while the white and black mice—the day and the night—gnawed at the bough to which I was hanging. I saw the dragon clearly, and honey was no longer sweet to me. I only saw the unescapable dragon and the mice, and I could not tear my gaze from them. . . .”

The country lay under a thick blanket of snow. Petersburg and Moscow still roared with delight over “Anna Karenina’s” first parts and clamored for continuation which was late in coming. At Yassnaya, Sophie Andreyevna was slowly recovering from her illness.

“ . . . It was then that I, ‘the happy man,’ took a string out of my room in order not to hang myself on the tie-beam between the book-shelves when, undressing in the evening, I remained there alone, and I gave up hunting with my shooting-gun in order not to yield to the temptation of thus conveniently freeing myself of my life. . . .”

IV

But he deliberately postponed the suicide: “For this I always will have time.” Hope still persisted in him that “there was some mistake” in his reasoning.

Since the very beginning of his crisis he had not ceased to peruse the pages of various philosophers, from Socrates and the Ecclesiast to Buddha and Kant; he plunged, too, into scientific treatises. “Like a man perishing seeks salvation,” he feverishly sought an answer to his questions. But he found it neither in philosophy, nor in science.

He also asked himself time and again how was it that other people lived without coming to despair?

He looked at men of his own class, but found no consolation. Some of them lived like birds, asking themselves no questions, and were happy; but this was the "happiness of ignorance," and lost to him. Many others—here he unconsciously projected his own trouble into his view of them—also dreaded death, but tried to find oblivion in dissipation, lust, Epicureanism. And all lived lives of "parasitic indolence and luxury." He turned away in disgust.

He looked at peasants, and here something soothing—perhaps a faint beam of hope—glimmered. It seemed to him that, in spite of their misery and privation, they were not unhappy. He concentrated all his attention. Yes, they were happy! "They live, suffer and approach death with tranquillity, most of them even with joy." Why? Because they have faith, he answered himself. He was more and more interested. Indeed, for them life does not end with death, it continues into immortality—and such life is not senseless, far from that! They know with firm assurance that they live "for the saving of their souls"; and they know that in order to save it "one must live in God, that is to say, renounce all pleasures, suffer, toil, be humble, patient, kind." These humble men have a clear answer to exactly those questions which he could not answer! What quiet, imposing wisdom! Hope glimmered more and more persistently: indeed—religion; infinite millions of these simple men thrive by it; is it possible that all of them should be mistaken and that he alone should be right in his skepticism, in his despair?

Tolstoy was exhausted by sufferings; God thus seen through the eyes of idealized people was the last straw which could save him; and so, unconsciously, he began to cling to that straw.

At a distance of three miles from Yassnaya passes the Kiev high-road, on which thousands of *stranniki* (pilgrims) from all parts of Russia walk in an almost uninterrupted procession to that ancient city. Earnest primitive believers and mystics, tattered, professional beggars and cripples with hideous ulcers, well-to-do merchants, men, women and children, they flock there to light a candle before a miracle-working ikon, to kneel at a historical altar, to pray before the relics of some saint. Dressed as a peasant, Tolstoy would now mix into this crowd and accompany them to a near-by inn kept for them by charitable people. There they ate, rested, undressed, told stories of their lives, or folk and

apocryphal legends. With what envy and feeling of inferiority he, Count Tolstoy, listened! And while he listened, inhaling the smell of their unwashed bodies, how soothed, comforted he felt!

But thirst for faith is not yet faith itself. Simultaneously with this, Tolstoy's mind was working feverishly: he was trying to "prove" to himself that the existence of God was not an impossibility. It would be impossible to enumerate all the casuistics which constantly circulated through his mind during this attempt to issue a logical passport to the Creator. One day, returning from his walk, he rushed to Sophie Andreyevna:

"How delighted I am!"

"Delighted—with what?"

"With you and my new religion."

But the next morning he felt that his mental efforts had resulted in nothing. He was, literally, daily, hourly, spying on himself: do I believe, at last? "Not once, not twice, but scores and hundreds of times I passed from joy and animation to despair . . ." This went on for months. . . .

Then a day came. In the "Confession," he wrote:

"This happened early in the spring [of 1877]. Alone in the forest, I listened to its rustles. And, while listening, I thought about that thing which was always on my mind. . . . I was seeking God.

"All right, I said to myself, there is no God. . . . But my idea of the God whom I am seeking, where does it come from? And again joyous waves of life rose in me. All revived around me, became full of meaning. But my joy did not last long. The mind continued its work.

"The idea of God, I said, is not God. . . . I can summon or not summon it to my mind at will. . . . What I am seeking is God, without whom no life would be possible. And again all began to die down in me and around me. And once more I felt the urge to kill myself.

"But here I looked at myself, at that which was going on in me; and I remembered these dyings-down and revivings through which I passed hundreds of times. . . . What are they? I do not live when I lose faith in God's existence; for would I not long since have killed myself if I did not have a dim hope in finding Him? And I live, I truly live when I feel Him and seek Him. 'What else do I need, then?'—an inner voice exclaimed in me.

"There is Him. He is that without which one cannot live. To know God and to live is the same. God is life. Live, seek God, and there will be no life without God' . . ."

Tolstoy believed.

Or, rather, Tolstoy definitely tricked himself into believing.

At the time, he noted: "I found God on the stump of a tree."

It is these spiritual experiences which lent to "Anna Karenina" its atmosphere of religious anxiety, of gravitation to God: here, too, in spite of the aversion with which he worked, Tolstoy could not help remaining an artist-autobiographer. But it is, as we know, especially in Levin that he expressed himself: for Levin finds faith through a mental process strictly similar to Tolstoy's.

Dostoevsky devoted a special article entitled "A Landlord Borrowing Faith from the Peasant," to Levin's seekings. We know how enthusiastic the great writer was over "Anna's" artistic quality; but here he proved to be skeptical. "Can gentlemen like Levin have real faith?" he asked, and went on answering: hardly so; in Levin's mind there is too much "loafing around," too much restlessness. "He will destroy his faith again, and he will do it himself, at that; he will bump into some mental nail of his own making, and all of his faith will crumble into dust . . ."

An ironical prophecy.

V

". . . As in childhood, he kneels in prayer every day; on holidays he drives to attend the mass at the church where peasants surround him and question him on the progress of the [Russo-Turkish] war; on Wednesdays and Fridays he fasts, and he always speaks of humility, stopping, half-jestingly, those who begin to criticize others. On July 7 he made a pilgrimage to Optina Pustyn [an ancient monastery], and returned highly satisfied with the wisdom, learning and ascetic life of hermits." (An entry in Sophie Andreyevna's diary for 1877.)

Faith has saved, faith has given back happiness; how, then, not be scrupulously faithful to it? And, of course, it must be that very faith which lives in the peasant, that is to say, the faith of the Greek-Catholic Church with all its rituals and requirements. Tolstoy now throws all the impatient passion of his nature into it.

He goes on business trips; see what is the vocabulary of his

letters to Sophie Andreyevna: "*Gospodi pomiluy* [God save] you and me . . ."; "Will be in Samara at 7, if God grants it . . ."; "All, except our good and bad deeds, is in God's will. Let this mention of God not annoy you, as it sometimes does; I cannot write otherwise: it is the essence of my thoughts. . . ."

Once, on a trip to Petersburg, Tolstoy dines in the house of Countess Alexandra's mother. In spite of the fact that it is Lent, meat is served: physicians did not permit the old and sickly mistress of the house to fast. But Tolstoy cannot hide his vexation. He frowns. As soon as the dinner is over, he asks an explanation from Countess Alexandra. She explains and adds:

"Est ce que cela vous dérangerait par hasard?"

He, briskly, irritably:

"Certainement. Quand on appartient à une église, le moins qu'on puisse faire c'est de suivre ses ordonnances."

The "grandmother" is struck with astonishment. To rebuke her, an unshakable Christian who, since her Geneva days tried vainly to convert him, for lack of religious zeal? So Léon is at last a son of the Church? Blessed be the heavens!

He himself is so uncompromising in fasting that once, when he falls ill, it is only with a special sanction of the local Bishop that he permits himself not to fast.

Tolstoy is again joyous and energetic. He has hardly rested after "Anna," than a new literary plan already ripens in his mind: he wants to write that very "Decembrists" which he considered before "War and Peace"; he collects material, sketches the beginning. At the same time he negotiates the purchase of a new large estate in Samara province, and he will soon buy it. His fortune now rises to about 600,000 roubles,—a sum more than considerable from the viewpoint of Russian standards. Wealth, health, the smiling Sophie Andreyevna, the merry, growing children. Sunny days have returned to Yassnaya.

The finding of faith leads to an amusing event. The Christian Tolstoy tries to be Christianly meek and forgiving to all; and this brings to his memory an old "sin" of his—his quarrel with Turgenev.

He writes an apologetic letter to his famous contemporary. Deeply touched, Turgenev answers immediately. ". . . With the greatest pleasure I am ready to renew our former friendship and to press your proffered hand. . . . I rejoice from the depth of my

heart that our misunderstanding should have come to an end. . . . I hope to be in the province of Oryol [he now permanently resides in France], and then we will meet. I send you my best wishes, and once more grasp your hand in friendship."

Indeed, in the summer of 1878, Turgenev speeds to Yassnaya. After sixteen years, the two friends embrace once more. How changed they both are!

Turgenev's stately head is snow-white; his movements are still alert, but he fully shows his sixties. He has become very soft and kind; of his former quarrelsomeness not a trace remains; something senile, pathetically, almost childishly weak, appears in his manner. He is overwhelmed by the attention and affection with which Sophie Andreyevna and even the children surround him. Perhaps to hide his emotion he talks a great deal and, as usual, humorously, brilliantly: even when he depicts a chicken swimming in the soup, all visualize it. Tolstoy, too, is at his best; those who happen to be present at the meeting are dazzled by the fountain of sparks and light.

On his way back to France, Turgenev again comes to Yassnaya for a few days (as he henceforth will always do on his visits to Russia). He praises Sophie Andreyevna to the skies—she is "a wife of the kind that exists no longer." And to Tolstoy he writes: ". . . I feel clearly that life which has made us old did not pass in vain for us; both you and I, we have become better, and it was a joy for me to feel it."

As for Tolstoy, he was irreproachfully polite and tactful with Turgenev, even cordial. But who would believe that, underneath this surface, the old irritation of the Sebastopol sub-lieutenant boiled in him more than once against his "literary nurse"; that time and again he had to control himself in order not to "blow up"? What has Turgenev done to him now? Nothing. But he writes to Foeth: ". . . I have decided to keep at a distance from him—trouble-seeker that he is!" The old Turgenev—a trouble-seeker? Sometimes it is hard indeed to be a Christian.

VI

Then clouds, or, rather, hardly perceptible cloudlets, begin to gather again—or do they only seem to do so?

At times Tolstoy returns from the church sad. Once he says: "No, this is painful. I stand there, among the peasants, hear

how their fingers clap on their rough fur-coats while they are making the sign of the cross. I also hear how, in subdued whisper, they talk of things which have nothing to do with the mass. Muzhiks' conversations about the harvest, *baba's* [peasant women's] gossip—and this during the most solemn moments of the service! How little conscious they are in religion."

And it is through their wisdom that he tries to see God. But he consoles himself. Once, on a sunny winter day, he is talking in the drawing-room with Alexeyev, his children's tutor and an avowed atheist; the window in front of which they are seated is covered with intricate patterns of frost through which the oblique rays of the setting sun penetrate into the room. Alexeyev expresses his astonishment over the zealous observance of Church-rites by the great writer. Interrupting him Tolstoy answers:

"Look at these patterns lit by the sun. We see on these patterns only the reflection of the sun, yet we know that, beyond them, somewhere far away, there exists the real sun, the source of that light which creates the picture we are admiring. Common people see in religion only this picture, this reflection, while I look further and see, or, at least, try to see also the source of light. And this difference does not prevent us from being in communion. They and I, we both look at this reflection, but our minds penetrate into it to unequal degrees of depth."

Words of an artist. But do his eyes really penetrate deep into the sun?

Fleeing from "the dragon," Tolstoy jumped into the Church ("there was no other place to flee to," he will write later); does that mean that he honestly accepts all of the church dogmas? Well. . . . At first he unconsciously hid that question from himself. Then he had to confess that a great many things in the Church doctrine and rites were unintelligible to him, shocked his mind. He tried to calm himself: through patient observance of these rites and through "communion with believers" their sense would open itself to him. But no. Instead of subsiding, doubts assert themselves and multiply.

Before Easter, for the first time since his young days, he goes to Communion. This is a solemn moment. "It was also a joy for me, humiliating myself before the confessor, a simple, timid priest, to undig before him all the filth of my soul, to open to him all my vices." But when, with a prayer, the priest approaches the

Holy Sacrament to his mouth and makes him repeat (in keeping with the ritual) that he believes that this wine and bread "are truly Christ's blood and flesh," all of his worked-up mood is gone, and unbearable shame "cuts as a knife" through his heart: no, he does not believe, these are just wine and bread and no more, and how dare they "force" him to utter these lies, to participate in this "sacrilegious" comedy!

And—alas,—this is not the only case. In joyous, soaring sounds the choir chants the glory of the Saviour who has risen from the dead. Risen from the dead? With distaste: ah, but how could it be? Again a lie. . . . And when prayers to the Holy Trinity are uttered, Tolstoy feels that, instead of praying, he boils with anger: the Holy Trinity—what does that mean? That God is 1 and 3 at the same time? "That 1 equals 3?" "But no human mind can accept that nonsense!"

To come to a dogmatic Church (whose entire doctrine is based on the notions of mystery and miracle) and ask for a rational explanation of its dogmas is about as senseless as to look for stock-exchange rates in a book of poems. One must either believe blindly, or not believe at all; it is a matter of feeling, not of reason. But Tolstoy, so divinely intuitive in art, is strikingly deprived of all religious intuition or fancy (one may call it either one according to one's taste); he is a stubborn rationalist; how then can his mind help asking for explanations? It is true that he forces himself to be as mentally-humble as the peasant, his spiritual guide, to bend his knees and worship without understanding; but where can this peremptory nobleman who, with his Herculean sensuality and powers, has acquired the habit of dominating art and life with such lordly ease, find humility? The rationalistic revolt against dogmatic "nonsenses" flares higher and higher in him. And, finally, he must confess to himself that at least two-thirds of the divine service and dogmas cannot be reconciled with his mind.

Dostoevsky turns out to have been a good prophet.

Tolstoy the moralist is also shocked by the Church. The Russo-Turkish war is in progress, and the Church prays "for the victory of our Christ-loving armies." "To pray that we may assassinate as many Turks as possible?" Moreover, the Church sanctions the execution of political offenders; cruelly persecutes with the help of the State various schismatics and sectarians;

fight against other Churches. To Tolstoy these distortions of Christianity are unbearable. No, "in the Church, truth is interwoven by subtlest threads with lies."

He makes last desperate attempts to explain all these contradictions to himself—to prove to himself that it is he, and not the Church, who is in the wrong. He visits monasteries, talks to monks, priests and bishops, asks for their advice. Nothing helps.

There comes a Wednesday or Friday when, instead of fasting, he takes a cutlet on his plate (meat dishes are cooked for two of the children's tutors who do not fast) and, to the great astonishment of the family, eats it with a great appetite.

His short-lived romance with the Church is ended. This period, too, is over.

Does this mean that Tolstoy again stands unprotected before "the dragon"? No.

He has turned away from the Church, but not from God, not from Christianity.

Religion still remains the only justification of his life. But what religion? The Church "blunders," this is clear. It has polluted the truth with "nonsenses," "lies." But there are truths; there is God.

Tolstoy surrounds himself with theological works, pores over the New Testament, the Bible. He must investigate all of Christianity for himself, separate "truths" from "lies" and rescue religion from the layers of dust and dirt beneath which it is buried.

It will be a colossal work, more colossal, indeed, than all of his artistic works taken together. But all of his interest, all of his enthusiasm is in it.

VII

During these sixteen years of married life, Sophie Andreyevna was, so to speak, healthily, normally advancing along those paths of patriarchal womanhood into which her husband, in his capacity of husband-pedagogue, had set her. The family did not cease to grow: in 1877 to the five surviving children, the sixth, Andrew, was added; in the four years that would follow, two more boys, Michael and Alexis, would come. And with the growth of the family her responsibilities grew also. She was literally all day long administering the house, watching the numerous servants, teaching the younger children, keeping an eye on the tutors of

the older ones, copying "Lyovochka's" manuscripts, etc. She did it all with a remarkable efficiency, common sense, and energy, like a good, reliable horse pulling a heavy cart. It is true that, overtired, she would at times write a bitter page in her diary about "slaving like that, and what for?" or even make—a rather unfounded—scene with Lyovochka. Her temper remained uneven and (during her pregnancies, which always were an ordeal to her) even hysterical. There were moments when even more serious revolts started in her against the monotony of the domestic virtue. She looked into herself, asked, "What do I want?" and answered: "I want merriment, I want chatter and dresses, I want that people should say that I am beautiful, that Lyovochka should see and hear it all. But then, with an exclamation of despair, I renounce all these wishes with which the devil tempts me, like Eve, and I seem to myself despicably bad." Indeed, the spirit of the coquettish girl, suppressed since the very first year of her marriage, still lived somewhere. But how innocently Victorian were such "revolts"!

But such moments were rare. "Lyovochka" never for a moment ceased to be the center of her inner world. Nor did her constant self-sacrifice for the family seem self-sacrifice to her. Most of the time she continued to thank Heaven for her happiness. "Roses and mignonettes stand on my table" she would jot down one day, "presently we are going to dine—an excellent dinner—the weather after the storm is pleasant; good dear children are around me, and in a minute the tender, beloved Lyovochka will come—this is my life . . ." Yes, this; and also the fame, money and prosperity which Lyovochka's work gave; she never pretended that these things did not matter to her, too. Withal, she continued to be the "ideal wife" of a genius—at least of a genius with Tolstoy's tastes.

With the beginning of Tolstoy's crisis a serious flaw appeared in her happiness. Seeing him suffer, she suffered. It was a relief to her when he became converted to the Church. But he briskly turned away from it. And now . . .

Now she writes to her sister:

" . . . Lyovochka is all absorbed in his writings. He has strange, fixed eyes, he hardly ever talks, is, as it were, not of this world, and is absolutely incapable of thinking about practical affairs . . . "

" . . . Lyovochka reads, reads, reads . . . He writes very little,

but sometimes he says: 'Now I begin to understand it,' or: 'if only God helps me, that which I am writing will be very important.'"

At times, he gets up in the night, lights the candle and, with a concentrated face, jots down a thought or makes a quotation from the New Testament, from which he never parts.

"He is, apparently, not at all so happy as I should like him to be; he is calm, brooding, silent. There hardly ever breaks forth in him that vivid, merry spirit by which he formerly carried away all of us. I ascribe this to the fatigue from strenuous inner work. It was different in the old days; after having written the scene of the ball or of the hunting-party in 'War and Peace,' he, merry and animated, looked as though he himself had taken part in these amusements . . ."

Does she fail to understand the importance which his religious researches have for him? No. She records his thoughts in her diary with great subtlety. She fully sympathizes with him, too. Yet, gradually, a feeling of disapproval, irritation, crystallizes in her against this new—theological—passion of his. And how could it be otherwise?

His theological concentrations become to her a synonym for joylessness, for her former husband replaced by a new, broodingly frowning, one. Moreover, she sees that this new work has definitely displaced from his mind artistic writing which she so loves and values ("Decembrists" is abandoned). During these years she has grown spiritually; she has acquired a habit of thinking of her own; her mind is clear, simple, to the point. She is religious, but in a traditional, matter-of-course, way. And in her eyes, there is some unhealthy extravagance, abnormality, in all that hopeless immersion into religion. To think that a grown-up man should for years make for himself a constant worry out of God-or-no-God, Church-or-no-Church, etc.! If she is all admiration for his art, she cannot help looking at this with an ironical shrug. Moreover, he now hardly pays his younger children a fraction of that attention which he paid to the older ones. This, as a treason to that life-building principle in which he himself trained her, angers and offends her. Besides, she feels fearfully, that if it goes on like that, "all the moral responsibility for the future of the children will devolve upon me alone . . . And I—will I be able to shoulder it? . . ."

Straightforward and sincere, she expresses it all to him. Her attitude apparently irritates him. Sometimes little misunderstandings and quarrels occur. Little misunderstandings and quarrels; yet the fact is significant: the former union and communion are gone; their ways imperceptibly seem to part.

But their conjugal love remains unimpaired. They still often live through "high tides" of passion which, with youthful strength, throw them into each other's arms. Whenever he leaves Yasnaya, he suffers violently without her: ". . . I think every minute of you, and feel like filling all this letter with tenderesses . . ." And she blushes with joy like a school-girl whenever, returning to Yasnaya, she sees "Lyovochka's gray overcoat at a distance." What, after all, has changed in her happiness? Nothing.

She puts it with her usual frankness: she hopes that his strange religious fever "will pass away, like a disease."

VIII

This painful immersion in theological problems and constant concentration on them last for four years—1878, 1879, 1880, and 1881. It is during these years that Tolstoy attains full "clarity" in matters of religion; that he works out that religion of his own by which (with minor modifications) he will abide until the end of his days and which will acquire such world-wide renown. He embodies the results of his toil in four works which he conceives and, for the most part writes, during these years. Before outlining his religion, we will briefly characterize these works.

The first of them (logically and chronologically) is the "Confession." This is a short introductory work. In it, Tolstoy proves the impossibility of life without faith by telling with full frankness the story of his crisis and conversion to the Church. He tells in it, too, the causes of his disappointment in the Church. The philosophic side of the "Confession" may contain weak points; but, beyond doubt, it is a burning human document of rare power and a literary achievement which does honor to its author. There are passages in it which one is tempted to compare with the Book of Job.

Second comes "The Criticism of the Dogmatic Theology." Taking the "Theology" by Makariy, Metropolitan of Moscow,

which is generally accepted in Russia, Tolstoy quotes it paragraph by paragraph and thus analyzes it at length. Often he deviates into other documents, from "Messages" of Eastern Patriarchs to modern theological treatises. Thus, all Church dogmas are analyzed and rejected as irreconcilable with common sense and logic. Not only rejected. Tolstoy cannot suppress his indignation and seethes with barbarously intolerant anger against the Church. His vocabulary is that of a "radical" soap-box orator. He accuses the Church, "with its impenetrable forest of stupidity," of malignantly "distorting" Christianity, and clergymen, those well-fed individuals "in silk and satin" of "plundering" the people. He derides rites and sacraments as "fooling"; only "weak-minded idiots, crooks, and women" can believe in it. Falling into a comical contradiction of himself, he asserts that the Russian peasant is "absolutely indifferent to the Church" (typically enough, the authority of the peasant is still needed as a supreme authority to prove a thesis). The poor Church has dared to fail to satisfy Count Tolstoy; he makes it pay a heavy price for the, as yet, recent mistake of his fasts and pious prostrations.

The third work is the two-volume "Criticism, Analysis and Codification of the Four Gospels." This is the basic work of the series, a product of truly colossal labor (one is once more baffled by Tolstoy's energy). Since the Church distorts the truth, Tolstoy cannot accept even the generally accepted Slavonic, Russian and European translations of the Gospels. He takes the Greek text and, surrounded by works of learned commentators, translates it himself word by word. Moreover, he "codifies" the Gospels, that is to say, puts together the passages coinciding in the narrative of all four Evangelists and rejects or explains the divergent passages.

Bad, dilettante knowledge of the Greek and the obstinate unconscious desire to find in the Gospels only that which suits his rationalistic mental taste permit him to uncover numberless "mistakes" "distorting the true sense" of the document. He zealously replaces them with his own, supposedly correct, versions. What is the result of these "rectifications"? In his eyes, they are enormous. Christ, Tolstoy asserts, never pretended to be anything more than a man. Moreover, Christ never spoke of any mystical, supernatural "nonsense" ascribed to Him by translators and often even by the Evangelists (they were, you see, "ignorant men,"

and, therefore, Tolstoy often "corrects" them, too). For instance, when Christ mentioned "the Heavenly Kingdom," He merely had in mind the reign of goodness among men and the immortality of human spirit; Tolstoy rejects with irritation the very thought that He could believe in any celestial Paradise. Miracles? The rising from the dead? Ah, but don't you understand that all this is the invention of contemporaries, and especially of that "hysterical wench" Magdalene? Of course, to accept or not to accept Christ's words is a matter of taste; but does not Tolstoy feel that this irreconcilable ironing out of them of all mysticism is their obvious misinterpretation, and not interpretation? No. The further he goes, the more he burns with enthusiasm: he earnestly believes that he is the first man to succeed in scraping off "an invaluable old canvas" the "later layers of paint" under which it was hidden.

Such are the negative results of Tolstoy's "analysis." It is on the ground thus cleared up that he constructs his own God and his own religion. He does it in "What My Faith Consists In?" which is the fourth and crowning work of the series (it will be completed only in 1883).

IX

If Tolstoy's negation was the result of patient, and as he himself believed, "scientific" labor, the positive part of his teachings came to him suddenly. He was constantly reading and re-reading the Gospels. And once a revelation visited him. In "What My Faith Consists In?" he thus describes it:

"... This was a momentary vanishing of all that which screened and hid the essence of [Christ's] teachings and a sudden illumination with the light of truth. It was something similar to that which might happen to a man vainly trying to reconstruct, with the help of a wrong design, a statue from a pile of confused, broken pieces of marble; suddenly, through the scrutiny of the largest piece, he would come to understand that all these pieces are parts of an entirely different statue."

What was this "largest piece" which revealed to Tolstoy the real sense of Christ's teachings? It was a careful re-reading of the Sermon on the Mount.

"The passage which was for me the key to all other things was ¶ 39, Chap. V of Matthew: "They told you, an eye for an eye, a

tooth for a tooth: but I say, Do not resist evil.' I suddenly understood that Christ meant exactly what He said. And immediately it was not that something new appeared, but all that which shadowed the truth from my eyes fell asunder and the truth rose before me in all its significance. 'You heard what the Ancients said: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But I say: Do not resist evil.' These words struck me as something absolutely new, as something which I had never heard before."

One may think that this is again a Tolstoyan "discovery." Indeed, in all the Gospels, are there any more often-quoted, misquoted, chewed and banalized words than these? But no—it is not as simple as that. The fact is that, looking through these words as through spectacles, Tolstoy has really succeeded in viewing all of Christ's teachings in a new light, as hardly any one has viewed them before him. The gist of these words lay not in the idea of non-resistance to evil itself; it lay, for Tolstoy, in the logical conclusions that derived from this idea.

"The principle of non-resistance to evil is the principle which binds the whole of [Christ's] teachings into one system, but only on the condition that it is taken not simply as a saying, but as a rule which must be abided by, as an absolute law. It is a key which unlocks all doors, but which unlocks them only if it is pushed to the bottom of the lock. . . ."

Tolstoy reasons thus. Why is it that diseases, misfortunes, the inevitability of death, make man unfortunate (and, in particular, made him, Tolstoy, unfortunate)? Because man is *selfish*, that is to say, because he regards his individual life and happiness as something important. And, as long as he persists in this attitude, he is bound to be unfortunate, for his individual life must end in extinction. Now, Christ, by His Sermon on the Mount, indicated to man the way out of this *impasse* of unhappiness into the absolute, indestructible happiness. By saying: "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him thy left cheek," Christ said: Renounce your selfishness completely; renounce all pleasures and joys; live not for yourself, but for others. Man dies; mankind continues to live. If you actually love your neighbors, that is to say mankind, more than you love yourself, if you thus completely *de-crystallize in mankind*, no personal misfortune will afflict you; you will become immortal and "enter God's Kingdom already here, on earth," for mankind is immortal, and you will

be fully dissolved in it. It is exactly in this freeing of man from his self, which is the root of all misfortunes and evils, that the great meaning of Christian love lies. After man's mortal shell dies, there will be no individual immortality "invented by the Church," either. Man's spirit will fuse in one with God who is Love. Such, in a few words, is Tolstoy's conception.

Now, what is the practical side of such interpretation of Christianity? How must man live in order thus to "de-crystallize"? Tolstoy's answer is clear. Cut off all those ties which attach you selfishly to life: renounce your property, live in misery, kill your sexual instinct, kill your flesh by asceticism, humiliate yourself, live in the sweat of your brow. Are these sacrifices not too heavy? Not at all,—Tolstoy answers; they are joys, not sacrifices, for they must give man the only real happiness that can exist. The last pages of "What My Faith Consists In?" breathe with enthusiastic pathos.

"I believe," Tolstoy writes, "that happiness on earth will be possible only when all men will fulfil the teachings of Christ. I believe that the fulfilment of these teachings is possible, easy and joyous. I believe that . . . even if I were the only one on earth believing in these teachings, I still would have to abide by them in order to save myself from inevitable peril. I believe that my life, as long as I lived in keeping with worldly teachings, was torturing, and that only life in Christ will give me . . . all of the happiness allotted to me by the Father of Life. . . ."

Thus, it is only now that Tolstoy's ten-year-long "flight from the dragon of death" is brought to its logical conclusion. How strange and paradoxical is this conclusion! The whole tragedy was started by the fact that Tolstoy, enamored of "selfish life," became afraid that, some day, it would be lost; and, from this feeling of abnormally developed "selfishness," he has now found refuge in a complete condemnation of all selfishness! This is paradoxical, but perhaps not unusual. Buddha, too, came to the denial of life from a happiness too perfect and great.

Philosophically, this is the finding of religion, of sense in life. Physiologically, it may be described as a painful transition to old age by one who loves life too much.

CHAPTER XII

"THE NEW LIFE"

I

"What My Faith Consists In?" will not be completed until 1883; but the religious creed set forth in it is already fully ripe in Tolstoy's mind in 1880.

Soon Tolstoy will write: ". . . My analysis of theology and of the Gospels are the best works of my thought, are that *one book* which, as the saying puts it, a man writes in his life-time. I have testimony to this effect from two learned and subtle critics who . . . have always told me the truth and who agree that the facts established by me are irrefutable. . . ." He apparently does not doubt for a minute that the "truth," the whole "truth" about God and man's life is now in his hands, and he is exalted with enthusiasm at the thought. "Strange as it may seem, it has remained for me, after eighteen centuries, to unearth Christianity as a novelty." With the unconscious arrogance of a fanatic, he earnestly believes that this is really so, and he does not dissimulate his pride in his discovery: "*Je suis fier d'être le premier qui ait mis le doigt sur la vérité.*"

One morning, he bursts like an avalanche, into the Petersburg apartment of his old friend, Countess Alexandra, and hardly taking the time to kiss her hand, begins a fervent, hasty and rather incoherent speech. Then, mistaking her bewildered silence for a sign of approval, he interrupts himself:

"Je vois que vous vous cristallisez déjà dans mon idée?"

She replies, rather coldly: "*Vous vous trompez, mon cher, je me cristallise si peu dans votre idée que je n'en ai pas encore saisi le sens.*"

Sensing a potential disagreement, he jumps up, as though stung:

"You don't understand? How is that? My idea is so simple



READING

A pencil drawing by I. Ryebin

that it can be expressed in two words: in my soul a window has opened itself; through this window I see God, and I need nothing, *nothing* else."

"What do you mean by *nothing*? Of course, the main thing is to believe in God, but I want to know *how* you believe in Him."

In response to this, he launched into a new tirade, with a violent denunciation of the Church, of its conception of divinity of Christ, etc. Countess Alexandra, a fervent church-believer, is aroused to indignation; she interrupts him, stamps her feet, and is ready to weep; both raise their voices higher and higher; and thus the battle between the gray-haired "grandmother" and the gray-haired "grandson" rages in the stately drawing-room of the Winter Palace until late in the night.

Next morning, the Countess Alexandra receives a note: "Do not be angry with me for leaving Petersburg without having said good-by to you. I cannot. I am too much excited by yesterday's discussion."

Excited, grieved, hurt. The fact is that Tolstoy earnestly believes that his religion, being based "on logic and on reason," must infallibly be accepted by every one who will honestly incline his mind to it, "for reason is the same in all men." Countess Alexandra's "reluctance to see the truth" deeply perplexes and offends him.

II

Since then, many months have passed. Having found his faith, Tolstoy neither realized, nor perhaps even asked himself, where he was standing or how this faith was going to influence his life; his attention was too completely concentrated on its essence to see what its practical consequences would be. But now, the accumulation of facts and experiences has answered these questions.

Tolstoy will always refer to his finding of religion as "my regeneration," "my awakening." Indeed, under the light of this newly discovered Christian "truth," his whole attitude towards life changed. These eighteen years of patriarchal happiness during which he accumulated, fathered and prospered, appeared to him as so many years of hideous "weltering in selfishness," as a continuous mistake and sin; "peasant life, obscurity, poverty, rudeness and simplicity of food, furniture, clothing and manners appeared to me as good and lofty." If so, what was to be done?

What did "the truth" demand from him? The answer was clear: to go and preach this truth to the world; moreover, to reform, or rather, to revolutionize his own life. "To divide the estate among the poor. . . . To become a beggar, to become a tramp." In his fifties the "Troglydyte" is as barbarously, as majestically noble as he was in his youth: he did not hesitate for a moment before saying that such was his duty.

Meanwhile, parallel with the growth of this feeling, life was treating Tolstoy to disappointment after disappointment.

He made attempts to proselytize Foeth and Strakhov; and although, unlike Countess Alexandra, they did not stamp their feet, these attempts failed—both remained politely cold to his "truth." Irritated, Tolstoy was on the point of quarreling with Strakhov: "He who is not with me is against me," he said to him. The proud, selfish and intelligent Count Serge Nicholayevich, Tolstoy's only surviving brother, is very fond of "Léon" and deeply respects his artistic genius; but he sums up his ascetic philosophy in an ironical phrase: "Our dear Léon has licked the caviar off the sandwich, and he now offers us the dry crust which remains." Worst, the more ardently Tolstoy talked, the clearer it became that his new religion met with no sympathy even within his own family. Serge, his eldest son, a soft and affectionate boy of seventeen, said frankly that he simply was "not interested" in all that Christian stuff; Tanya and Ilya spoke in the same vein. As for Sophie Andreyevna, the practical side of her husband's new preachings not only displeased her, but aroused her indignation. To transform themselves from noblemen into peasants? To make children accustomed to French and English governesses run barefooted in the village? To her sane mind, this was pure madness. "How, with nine children," she will write many years later, "could I turn like a weather-cock in the direction in which my husband, constantly changing, drifted mentally? For him, it was an ardent, sincere seeking; on my part, it would have been a pitiful imitation, and positively harmful to the family." But that was not all. Tolstoy attempted to publish "A Confession," but, since it contained attacks on the "Established" (Greek-Catholic) Church, it was prohibited by the censorship. His other religious works were even more outspoken; and thus it became evident that he could not even think of propagating his ideas through press.

Meanwhile, an interesting attack on Tolstoy was being planned. Countess Alexandra met Dostoevsky. He immediately began to bombard her with questions: What was happening to Tolstoy? What was this "new religion of his"? Countess Alexandra read him Tolstoy's proselytizing letters to her (for Tolstoy continues to write them). Apparently, nothing could be more revolting than Tolstoy's skyless, desert-like Christianity to Dostoevsky, the Christian mystic and visionary. Listening to Countess Alexandra's reading, he literally groaned with pain; his emaciated face with its stern eyes twitched with emotion and, holding his head between his hands, he exclaimed: "But it isn't so! Oh, no! It is not so!" And he decided to meet Tolstoy personally and talk to him.

A few days later, however, a long procession of statesmen, writers, journalists, ascended the dingy staircase and filed silently into Dostoevsky's poor flat; paler than ever, the emaciated face looked up at them, in aloof tranquillity, from a coffin.

A few weeks afterwards, all Russia was shaken still more profoundly by yet another death. On March 13, 1881, in Petersburg, two bombs, thrown by Terrorists, tore to pieces the body of Alexander II, the kindest, most intelligent and liberal of all Russian Emperors of the nineteenth century. No sooner had Tolstoy recovered from the horrible shock of this news than his decision was taken: he would write to Alexander III, the assassinated Emperor's son and successor, admonishing him to pardon the assassins. A document burning with Christian pathos flew to Petersburg. ". . . Forgive them, do them good for the evil they did . . ." Tolstoy implored: "Sire! If you do it, if you summon these men, give them money, send them away somewhere, to America, and issue a manifesto beginning with the words: 'And I say, Love your enemies . . .'?—I do not know about the others, but I, a bad subject of Your Majesty, will be your dog, your slave! . . . But what am I saying: 'I do not know about the others?' I do know that a stream of love and goodness will flow from these words over all of Russia. . . ." But here, too, Tolstoy's burning words remained unanswered: the letter was submitted to the Emperor, yet five of the "Party of the People's Will," the Terrorists who carried out the assassination, were executed.

Thus, metaphorically speaking, Tolstoy rushed from man to man with a golden platter on which lay his "truth," that is to say, that which was in his eyes the greatest treasure of the world; but all turned away from it with a skeptical shrug of the shoulders. These disappointments multiplied. Unconsciously hurt in his vanity, Tolstoy could not help taking every such disappointment as a painful personal offense.

Moreover, Tolstoy found himself faced by a puzzling question. "To be a beggar, to be a tramp . . ."—such was his duty, his dream; he had no doubt, no hesitation about that. But how could he do so, if his family were so frankly inimical to his religion? Persuade them? But they yielded to no persuasion. Give away their fortune without their consent? But this violent imposition of Christianity on reluctant people would be a hideous and ridiculous caricature of his religion—he shrank from the very idea in disgust. To abandon them and walk away alone, a tramp on the high-road? But that would mean that he would begin his new "Christian" life by inflicting cruel tragedy and misfortune on nine human beings whom he loved and who loved him. No, from that, too, his mind shrank. "To abandon the family—a temptation like that of destroying oneself," he noted laconically in his diary.

Paradoxically enough, this meant that, no matter how strongly he thirsted for a drastic change, for Christian self-sacrifice, he could alter nothing, sacrifice nothing. Not only did others not obey his teachings—he himself could not obey them. What happened was what usually happens with creators of Utopias who, enchanted with their dreams, gallantly mistake them for realizable plans: life says "No"; or, even without saying "No," it merely brushes them aside, and that is all.

Spells of sadness succeed his former enthusiasm. The thought that he is fated to live in constant conflict with his dogma fills him with unbearable anguish. He writes: "I wish I might die. . . ." And here, as though to hurt his feelings still more, Turgenyev arrives in Yassnaya and, carried away by the merriment of the youth he finds there, dances the Parisian cancan.

Tolstoy's disposition sours. It is in vain he tells himself that "one must constantly smile with one's soul at the entire world," that Christianity demands the cultivation of good feelings. He becomes irritable, despotic, extremely intolerant. His vanity is

piqued; he seems to bear a constant grudge against Sophie Andreyevna for "not following" him; and his domestic preachings are more and more often tinged with anger. His mind, with typical pedanticism, introduces his doctrine into all the details of domestic life, making philosophic tragedies out of literally every trifle. Bottles of champagne are uncorked at dinner, when they have guests. He confides words of despair to his diary, on that "debauchery of luxury." Sophie Andreyevna gives a ball for the children. He makes the most biting remarks: her education of them is "demoralization," she "kills their souls"; instead of being aristocratic good-for-nothings, they "ought to shovel in the streets." He knows but too well that he has no right to insist: it is he himself who, in the years of his "blindness," brought them up in these traditions. But the result is that the breach between him and Sophie Andreyevna widens. He begins to feel as a stranger in the midst of these, still beloved, beings. Soon he will note:

"It is painful for me to be with my family . . . I cannot sympathize with them. I regard all their joys, examinations, successes in society, music, furniture, purchases, as an evil and a misfortune for them, and I cannot tell it. That is to say, I do tell it, but my words do not impress anybody. They grasp, as it were, not their meaning, but only the fact that I have the bad habit of uttering them. In moments of weakness—this is such a moment—I am astonished by their pitilessness. How do they fail to see that I am not only suffering, but that I literally have no life? . . . The rôle of a grumbling old man is imposed upon me, and, in their eyes, I cannot stop playing it. . . ."

Sometimes, however, he in a sense frees himself from the prison of doctrine. He realizes that the Christian ideal is unattainable. Then why does he bewilder and embarrass his family? He is ashamed. Thus, during this very summer, he writes to Sophie Andreyevna from his Samara estate: "I still feel and think as I used to, but I have cured myself of the delusion that other people must look at things through my eyes. I am terribly guilty before you, my love. . . ." And he promises her "to be a good boy in your sense of the word." When he is in such a mood, he does, indeed, become the old, charming Tolstoy once more. And sometimes this lasts for weeks. But then the devil of sanctity seizes him anew, he is horrified by his "downfall," and the tragi-

comedy starts all over again. Hence, constant contradictions in his behavior. Thus, in the fall of this year, 1881, Sophie Andreyevna decides that, for the sake of the older children's education, the family will spend the winter in Moscow. He is very displeased with this decision; life in the city, with its "wealth," is still more "un-Christian" than life in the country. And during their first weeks in Moscow, he makes a real tragedy of it: he "does not sleep, does not eat and often literally cries." But in the fall of 1882 he will be in one of his sane and merry moods; forgetting his last year's behavior, he himself will insist on again moving to Moscow; the enemy of "the filth" of "light-minded" amusements himself takes Tanya to a ball at Count Olsufyev's; moreover, the deadly enemy of private property buys a comfortable and spacious house on Khamovniki Street and furnishes it with great gusto. Numberless, indeed, are the inconsistencies which, torn between life and doctrine, he commits and will commit.

All this is strikingly reminiscent of Tolstoy's youth with its moralistic absurdities. Indeed, the whole "new life" is, so to speak, a violent un-making of the happy married years. His new apprehension turns him back to the place where he stood on the eve of his marriage, he picks up the moralistic thread of his character which he once discarded as "a Pharisaian fancy of youth" and decides henceforth to follow it only. But then he was a turbulent young seeker; now he is a cock-sure finder; then it was a moralistic pimple, which was comical; now it is a morally philosophic abscess, which is meaningful.

III

The news of Tolstoy's "religious regeneration" has become a sensational event for the Russian public. His prohibited works—partly exactly because they are prohibited—arouse general curiosity and circulate in thousands of hand-written and hectographed copies all over the country.

The moving of the Tolstoy's to Moscow not only puts an end to their isolation, but creates a sharp contrast to it. Eager to meet Tolstoy, crowds of visitors flock to their house as to a Mecca; during this and the following years literally thousands of writers, artists, all sorts of notorieties, old and new friends of the aristocratic *beau monde*, Nihilists, etc., will pass through the Tolstoy's

drawing-room. Sophie Andreyevna beams with pride at her husband's popularity. As for Tolstoy, he regards it as his proselytizing duty to meet men. Often, at Sophie Andreyevna's tea-table, heated philosophic discussions start: Tolstoy's religion is criticized by Professor So-and-So or Prince So-and-So, and, with burning eyes, Tolstoy fights back with a shower of vehemently brilliant paradoxes. But sometimes he is attacked from another angle, too: he is attacked for preaching asceticism and yet living comfortably in wealth. He boldly explains that he does not want "to destroy love in the family." But one can imagine how painful such accusations are, striking him as they do in the most vulnerable spot. Soon he will write to a correspondent:

"... I am asked: If you believe that there is no real life outside of the observance of Christian teachings, ... why do you not observe them? I answer that I am guilty and despicable, and worthy of contempt. But, in order to explain my position, and not to justify myself, I add: ... I have not yet observed even a one ten-thousandth part of what I ought to observe, but not because I lack the will. Teach me how to extricate myself from the chain of circumstances fettering me, and I will observe. ... Accuse me, as I accuse myself, but do not accuse the road which I have chosen and which I indicate to those who ask my advice. If I know the road leading home, but walk on it drunk, reeling from side to side, does it mean that the road is to blame? If I blunder and stumble, help me as I am ready to help you, but do not giggle and shout: 'Look! He says that he is going home, but instead he has gotten into a swamp! ...' Help me; my heart is being torn to pieces at the thought that we all have lost the road. ..."

On the whole, however, he is calm. He seems to have resigned himself to his position of a prisoner to sinful life. He works a great deal. He continues to write religious works. But he complains of "spiritual loneliness." What he wants is not curious onlookers attracted by his fame, but "brothers and sisters" who will share his faith. He eagerly seeks them, and makes most peculiar friendships. Thus, he meets one F. Fyodorov, a learned and half-crazy librarian who, out of Christian asceticism, sleeps on piles of old newspapers and hardly ever washes. For a time he goes in raptures over this man, in whom he sees the incarnation of all Christian virtues. Fyodorov, however, has his own

"scientific theory of the resurrection of the dead in blood and flesh"; and this somewhat displeases Tolstoy.

Far more serious is Tolstoy's infatuation for one Syutayev. Syutayev, indeed, is an interesting type. A simple peasant of the province of Tver, he arrived, independently of any influence, at an interpretation of Gospels closely similar to Tolstoy's. He has made of his family a sort of a Christian commune in which no one owns any property individually: even women's kerchiefs are communal. Military service is, in his eyes, a sin; and one of his sons was kept in jail for a long period for refusing to serve his term. Syutayev is so convinced of the truth of his religion that he even walked on foot to Petersburg and tried to submit to the Emperor a petition in which he begged the monarch to make his interpretation of the Gospels mandatory for all Russia. . . .

Hearing of this man, Tolstoy drives to his village; they talk all day long, and a bond of friendship is immediately established between them. Driving his guest back to the station in his cart, Syutayev, as usual, takes no whip with him: he never strikes animals; the two new friends become so immersed in a conversation on God's Kingdom on earth that they do not notice how the horse strays away from the road; and they come back to reality only when their cart turns over and they find themselves in a ditch. Henceforth, Syutayev often visits Tolstoy, and Tolstoy creates quite a fame for him in Moscow by taking him from one aristocratic house to another and by making him talk and preach there.

Thus the winter smoothly proceeds, until—

IV

In January 1882, Tolstoy is invited to participate, as a supervisor, in a census which is going to be made in Moscow. Wishing to come in touch with the actual want of the population, he accepts, and chooses for himself one of the poorest sections of the city. On his very first visit to its tenement houses and slums he sees sights of appalling misery. As a villager *par excellence*, he formerly was little familiar with this angle of city life. And he is so impressed by it that, returning to his comfortable home where a five-course dinner is being served by two silent, white-gloved lackeys, he begins to tremble and, like a madman, shouts, with tears in his voice: "It is impossible to live so! Impossible! Im-

possible!" He returns to the slums daily, writes articles about the sufferers and tries to raise money for them; and, in the nights, sleepless, he cries.

We know the process of Tolstoy's disproportionately vivid reaction to visual evidences; we know the responsiveness of Tolstoy's heart, too. Of course, even before his "regeneration" he would have been quite as horrified by these sights. But now this is not merely an impression which will be forgotten: this impression falls on the background of his religion of Christian love. The result is that he lives through a real new crisis.

Already when first he discovered his "truth," wealth became hateful to him not only as one of the "strongholds of selfishness," but also as "the theft by the rich of the product of the labor of the poor"; in this—and only in this—his philosophy coincides with Socialism. But then he chiefly concentrated on the inner, spiritual side of Christianity. Now, however, aroused by this new impression, he looks at the world at large; he re-estimates, in his own way, social and economic relations; he passes, so to speak, through a social-humanitarian crisis, as he passed through a religious one.

Who is responsible for the existence of this misery, of these sufferings? He answers: "We, the rich," for whom these "hungry, depraved, drunken wretches" labor. And among the rich he, Tolstoy, the wealthy landlord who, failing, in his self-satisfaction to realize it, has all his life long "plundered the peasants." His reaction to the sight of the slums was so violent because he sincerely saw in these sufferers *his* victims.

". . . I understood, not with my mind or heart, but with my whole being that the existence of scores of thousands of such people in Moscow—while I and the thousands of others overeat on beefsteaks and sturgeon and cover our houses with cloth and carpets—no matter what all the learned men in the world may say to justify it—is a crime committed not once, but perpetually; and that I, with my luxury, not merely tolerate it, but participate in it. . . . I felt and feel, and will never cease to feel, that, so long as I have any superfluous food and some one else has none, so long as I have two coats and some one else has none, I participate in a constantly repeated crime."

It is not an exaggeration to say that Tolstoy was conscience-stricken for the rest of his life by all inequality, injustice, suffering—by all vices of society, as by his own vices. His heart will

never cease to ache for men. In the sincerity of this aching—no matter how Quixotic it may be—who can fail to perceive unusual moral grandeur? It is now, as Romain Rolland puts it, that the face—moral and physical—of mature Tolstoy is fully formed. “He looks overwhelmed. A double furrow traces symmetrical lines in the large, comely face. There is so much goodness, such tenderness in the great, dog-like muzzle, in the eyes that regard you with so frank, so clear, so sorrowful a look. They read your mind so surely. They pity and implore.”

In 1884, he will begin to write “What Shall We Do, Then?” This is a new philosophic work in which, starting from his census-taking experience, he expresses his Christian understanding of economic and social life, as we have just summarized it. Moreover, in this work he attacks the State as violently as he previously attacked the Church: by its system of private property, police, armies, compulsion, etc., the State legalizes and supports this “permanent plundering of the poor.” It is, thus, as much of an anti-Christian institution as the Church; it ought not to exist. Thus, Tolstoy formulates for the first time his idea of Christian anarchism. Tolstoy’s economic reasonings abound in naïvetés. But his onslaught on the injustices of our civilization burns with such pain of offended humanity, and his Herculean paws clutch, and tear, and strike, with such power that a genuine and deeply impressive greatness of heart emerges from these pages.

During these years his thought often returned to the problem of poverty and inequality in another connection also. His position as a wealthy man, of course, became to him still more intolerable than before. For family reasons, he was fettered to wealth; yet, even so, was there no way of living without “absorbing other people’s lives”? And gradually his mind evolved quite a theory, which he set forth in “What Shall We Do, Then?”

What does it mean “to use other people’s labor”? Tolstoy reasons by straight lines. It means to eat the bread for which fields were plowed and grain was raised by peasants; to wear clothes made by tailors, shoes made by shoe-makers, etc. It is this way that we enslave hundreds of hands that are working for us. “What shall we do, then,” to get away from this? Tolstoy answers: Repent of your former exploitation; reduce your needs to the peasant minimum—“simplify yourself”; satisfy your needs by your own physical work,—be your own land-tiller, tailor,

carpenter, etc. In theories of differentiation of labor Tolstoy does not believe; they are "a lie invented to justify the idleness of the rich"; the thought that by his literary work he was earning the right to get in exchange for it the manual work of others he rejects with contempt; he was pleasantly "amusing himself" in his study and amusing thereby the idle minds of other "men of our class," and in "exchange" for this others were sweating for him. This form of exploitation was, indeed, especially objectionable, because it was hypocritical. Man must himself sweat for his needs; moreover, he must sweat for the needs of others, too. He must do it with humility, "lovingly and cleanly"; only this will make him the brother of laboring people; only this will enable these people to look at him with love, and not with hatred and envy.

Thus, at last, a practicable program is found. This program is a compromise. If three years ago Tolstoy panted for complete heroic renunciation of wealth, now he is ready to satisfy himself with a substitute.

V

Already in 1881, he dismissed the cultured costume and adopted peasant clothes: soft high boots, wide shirt and pants, etc. Meeting him in such attire at the doors of an aristocratic house, Countess Alexandra could not keep from exclaiming: "What a masquerade!" It was then, too, that he sometimes went to the Vorobyovy Mountains and cut wood there with the workmen. Now, as his theory has ripened, he goes further. Early in the morning, he pumps water from the well and supplies the house with it. He heats stoves. He sweeps the floor of his room and takes out the garbage. In summers, he works in his own fields and in the fields of poor peasants. Finally, since 1884, an elderly cobbler rings the doorbell of the Khamovniki house several times a week, and is shown into "His Excellency's" study by the lackey; the count learns to make shoes; soon he will attain such perfection that his daughters will wear shoes of his make. Of course, there are times when, forgetting the pails somewhere, he briskly rebukes a servant for not having brought them home. There are days, too, when he practically forgets this whole program. Yet, on the whole, this "work" henceforth becomes a permanent ingredient of his "new life"; he will stick to it until he is very old.

But neither is this all. Tolstoy refuses to eat the "lord's" food; peasant dishes are cooked specially for him, and he absorbs them demonstratively with exaggerated appetite. He learns to drink tea in the peasant manner, sipping it from the saucer through a piece of sugar held in the mouth. He even tries to speak with a peasant accent. "How good" that the boots he made cost him "only two roubles, whereas at a store they would cost seven!" He is so carried away by this play-acting that he apparently completely forgets that the peasant food he eats is cooked for him with utmost care and is served on excellent porcelain plates, that the tea he sips is a very high grade tea, and that he does not need the boots he makes at all. A peasant-simpleton. In a conversation with a friend he proves enthusiastically that even the dirt in which peasants live is a very good and Christian thing, that "real Christianity must be lousy" (what a pity that they do not permit him to have these Christian insects in his beard!). Later the extremes will be dropped; but the essential tendency will never leave him.

Sophie Andreyevna shrugs her shoulders with suppressed irritation and describes it as *yurodstvo*, fooling-in-Christ. Once she and the children leave for Moscow in the fall, while he remains in Yassnaya for two more weeks. She writes to him:

"I received your first letter yesterday, and it made me sad. I see that you have remained in Yassnaya not for mental work, which I value above all in the world, but to play at Robinson Crusoe. You dismissed Adrian [a servant], . . . you dismissed the cook, for whom it was a pleasure not to receive his pension for nothing, and now from morning until evening you are going to do that senseless physical work which, even in peasant households, only young folks do. . . . It pains me that such mental forces as yours should be wasted on the cutting of wood, on the lighting of the *samovar* and on the making of boots. . . . But enough of it. If I did not speak it out, irritation would remain in me; but now it has passed. . . . I have suddenly recalled you clearly to my mind, and I feel such a wave of tenderness for you. There is in you something so intelligent, kind, naïve and persevering, and all this is illuminated by the light of tender attention to all, and by the look of your eyes which penetrates right into the souls of men. . . ."

But the public sensation created by his "simplification" is enormous. Some jest; many misinterpret it, seeing in it some "radi-

cal political protest"; but, at bottom, all feel behind it perhaps a clumsy, yet a sincere, and therefore imposing, moral effort.

And Tolstoy? Does he fail to understand the absurd comicality of the sight which he presents? No, at times he does not. He will soon write in distress to a friend, that his physical work "is senseless, because there is no real need for it. . . ." But he is obstinate. Working on a shoe in his study, he challengingly assures his visitors that now his conscience is clearer, that his "feeling of guilt before the laboring masses has diminished." Contradiction only excites unconscious pride: how can he be wrong, if he "logically arrived at it"? Once a friend sitting in his study and looking out of the window asks him:

"What is that large building surrounded by a fence there?"

"They say," Tolstoy answers, "that this is a mad-house. But," and he smiles, "I do not understand why they need the fence around it."

Indeed, he does not dissimulate that, in his eyes, the whole world with its "generally accepted ideas" is a mad-house, and that he alone, guided by Christian reason, is sane.

And yet . . .

To-night, as usual, there were visitors, there were animated discussions. After they have left, Tolstoy, to refresh himself, goes for a stroll in the sleeping, snow-covered streets of Moscow. See what happens.

". . . Crossing the Dyevichye Field on my way home I saw there something writhing on the ground, and heard the policeman's voice: 'Well, daddy Kostya, lead them!' 'What is it?' I asked. They explained that they had arrested prostitutes at Protochny Street; three of them were already taken away; the fourth one, drunk, resisted. I came up. The janitor of the near-by house lit her with a lantern; I saw a girl with a figure like that of my thirteen-year-old Marie, with nothing on but a torn, dirty dress. Her voice was drunken, hoarse; she refused to go and was trying to light a cigarette. 'Get up, you s—, or I'll break your neck!' the policeman shouted. I looked into her face—a snub-nosed, gray, old, savage face. I asked her how old she was; she answered—fifteen. They led her away. . . .

"They led her away, and I did not take her with me, did not make her sit at my dinner-table, did not bid her stay and live with us,—did not fill with love for her. They led her to the police-

station to keep her there until the morning and then to take her to a physician for a medical examination. I went home to lie down in a clean, comfortable bed and to read books. Oh, but what is this all? I decided to go to her in the morning, and I did go; but she was no longer at the police station. . . .

"I am praying: Lord, teach me how I must live so that my whole life should not be abominable to me. . . ."

VI

Meanwhile, the breach between Tolstoy and Sophie Andreyevna began to translate itself into the language of misunderstandings.

As she will write later, "At first I was bewildered and did not understand how one could live with ideas like my husband's; I grieved, I was upset." She is honest and sincere. Reasoning calmly, she was ready to bow to the sincerity of her husband's efforts. "Lyovochka," she wrote, "is a leader walking before the crowd" and trying to find the road for men. But she,—she was "one of the crowd":—"I confess that it is difficult to give up the toys with which we play in life; like everybody, or even more so, I firmly cling to them, and am amused and gladdened by their glitter and noise. . . ." She was frank; she was not "ripe" for the toyless joylessness of his faith.

But he continued, at times, to preach and "denounce"; she found herself obliged to defend the established aristocratic traditions in the education of children, in life in general, from his attacks. He obstinately tried to inflict at least a partial ruin on his fortune. She opposed him, fought, and the fear that he would go still further in this direction constantly haunted—and will haunt—her. She understood that heavy years lay before her, that she "would have a heavy cross to carry." At times, keen jealousy of "his being saturated with Christianity and thoughts of self-improvement" seized her. At moments, all of his unselfish Christianity appeared to her—and perhaps not quite unjustly—as just "a terrible selfishness" on his part,—a selfishness towards her and the children. Like him, she is peremptory, explosive and impatient. There were quarrels; there were tears. But the moment "Lyovochka" would smile, she would smile; and, in spite of all his worries he smiled, and will smile, often; he cannot help remaining a full-blooded man.

Thus comes the summer of 1884. And during this summer, unexpectedly, things take a rather more serious turn.

It is now that he begins to add yet a new element to his "new life." "Kill your selfishness, your flesh,"—the "truth" demands; hence (how strikingly it reminds one of "the rules of life" of his youth!) he makes attempts to give up smoking, to give up wine, and later he will compel himself to pass to vegetarianism. Moreover, "thou shalt not kill" even animals; and he gives up his life-long passion—the hunt. It is not easy to force oneself in the Procrustean bed of these "do nots," especially when one's mouth is so greedy for tobacco, wine, "beefsteaks," one's eye—for game, one's whole being, for life. He is very dissatisfied with himself, and, therefore, especially gloomy. Meanwhile, Sophie Andreyevna is in the last month of a new pregnancy; and, as usually in such a condition, she is extremely unbalanced, nervous, hysterical. Unpleasant conversations between them occur especially often. A truly unprecedented irritation against her begins to boil in him.

"June 13. Her stupidity, dulness of soul,—I can bear that. But, together with it, her impertinence, self-confidence . . . No, this too, I must bear, if not with love, at least with pity. I am irritable, gloomy, bad. . . .

"June 14. Conversation at tea with wife, and again anger broke out. Tried to write, but it does not go. . . . How can I shine with light when I still am full of weaknesses which I am unable to conquer? . . .

"June 22. It is terrible that I myself am responsible for the luxury and debauchery of life in which I am living, and that I myself am demoralized and cannot reform. . . . I cannot give up smoking and cannot find the right way of treating my wife so as neither to hurt her, nor to yield to her. . . ."

And is it Tolstoy who notes that of his "loving and beloved" wife? He writes further, that she is "a tiger walking around me and ready to [jump] . . ."; she "is a mill-stone around my neck. . . ."

Once more a collision with her, and his thoughts turn to the long-since-abandoned idea of "going away":

"June 28. . . . Indeed, what do they need me for? What are all my sufferings for? No matter how heavy the conditions of a tramp's life may be (besides, they are light), there can be

nothing in them like this pain of heart! . . . I cannot continue this wild life. It would be useful for them, too. They would bethink themselves if they have anything like a heart. . . ."

And then—

On that day he is energetic and cheerful. In the afternoon, he mows in the park, takes a swim in the pond and, refreshed, comes home. Sophie Andreyevna greets him with hysterical reproaches for his decision to sell some horses (apparently, she sees in it—and, this time, wrongly—a new attempt to inflict financial loss on the family). His cheerful mood gives way to such indignation that he can restrain himself no longer. Interrupting her speech, he runs to his room, sticks a few things into a little bag, takes it, on a stick, on his shoulders and, saying that he will never come back, leaves the house.

He walks on the high-road to Tula, "a beggar, a tramp." As he walks, his wrath cools. Besides, he remembers that she is about to be confined. He turns back. As he is entering the house, his angry eye perceives "the bearded muzhiks" (it is so that he refers to his older sons) playing cards. The rest of the children are on the croquet ground. He enters his study and throws himself on the sofa. Night comes, but he lies sleepless. . . .

Meanwhile, Sophie Andreyevna's birth pangs have begun. Torn by pains and crushed by the thought that her "Lyovochka" has left her, what can she feel? At three o'clock in the morning she creeps down-stairs, enters his study. Kneeling before him, all in tears, she implores:

"Forgive me! The pangs have begun! Perhaps I won't survive it. . . ."

His face remains as cold as it was; he does not utter a word of reconciliation.

In the morning, his daughter Alexandra is born.

In his diary he expresses great dissatisfaction over the fact that the birth of a child, "this most sacred event in the life of man," has taken place without "solemnity," "as something unnecessary." And of Sophie Andreyevna he writes: "If there is some one who governs our lives, I want to reproach Him. This is too difficult and pitiless. Pitiless to her. I see that, with accelerating speed, she is drifting towards peril and terrible inner sufferings. . . ."

Of course, reconciliation comes soon, and they are again affectionate husband and wife, they live through new "high tides of passion." But henceforth similar scenes will regularly recur, adding an after-taste of mutual hatred to their still great mutual love. Meanwhile, the habit of quarrels will, so to speak, demoralize them both; both will become more and more unrestrained in speech and tactless towards each other; and often such scenes will take place in the presence of children, with the children standing bewildered, crying and howling, while the parents fling angry words at each other. The making of shoes which no one needs and growing discord in the family—these, so far, are the concrete results of Tolstoy's regeneration. Does he not understand that, from the Christian viewpoint, the questionable good of the former does not outweigh the obvious evil of the latter? In his calm moments he realizes the "despicableness" of his conduct, repents, stigmatizes himself. Yet, in matters of religion, his mind is often almost unbelievably pedantic and formal. He seems to be unable to get over the fact that Sophie Andreyevna is "guilty" of "holding him in sin." The great Tolstoy is the prisoner of a little, cruel and exacting doctrine. War against Church and State; war against "generally accepted ideas"; war against himself, his own instincts, his own family; all of his life henceforth is very much of a psychological walking with one's heels up and one's head down.

And Sophie Andreyevna? She forgives and forgets quickly, no doubt. When, putting aside his vegetarianism and sweeping of the floors for a time, "Lyovochka" again looks tenderly at her, plays the piano with her, and, surrounded by youths who, at such moments, cling to him as before, organizes choral singing, her happiness returns. But such days become less and less frequent; days of "virtue" come more and more often. And her inner wound, her offense and pain at the thought that she, his ultra-faithful wife and mother of his children, is "placed in the position of permanent guilt," is regarded "almost as a criminal," grow. ". . . Lord, how great is the unconscious cruelty of the dearest men, and how great is their selfishness! Why do I continue to bustle? I do not know; but I think I must. That which my husband wants—at least, theoretically—I cannot carry out without first having severed those sentimental, business- and family-ties by which I am tied. And thus, to go away, from this

home or from this life, from these cruel demands that exceed my forces,—this desire pursues me day and night. . . . If the salvation of man's soul consists in the worrying of life out of a near one, Lyovochka, no doubt, has saved himself. . . ." Such entries now occur more and more frequently in her diary.

Meanwhile, she continues to surround him with innumerable little attentions. When he goes out, she sees to it that he is warmly clothed. When he is ill—and, as he grows old, he often falls ill—she does not leave his bed-side. She puts perfumed *sachets* into his linen; and, mechanically, without thinking of what he is doing, the stern ascetic inhales the odor of his handkerchiefs: he likes good French perfume. While he talks at the tea-table, she quietly puts a saucer of jam before him, and he eats it. And she says to one of her brothers: "Do you think that if I had no little children, I would not throw everything away and follow Lyovochka?"

In the fall of this same year, Tolstoy takes an important decision. He calls Sophie Andreyevna to his study and, frowning, announces that he wants to transfer to her the property of his lands, literary rights, everything: he regards property as an evil and does not want to have any longer.

"And so you want to hand over this evil to me, the being nearest to you?" She bursts into tears. "I do not want anything. I won't take it."

He insists. Finally, they agree on a compromise: he gives her powers of attorney which make her the sole administrator of his fortune. Henceforth he will not "soil" his hands with any "low" worldly affairs; let Martha do it.

VII

The proud dream that his religion would over night create a large popular following which Tolstoy, as he admits, had in the beginning, has not come true. Yet his prohibited works and "simple clothes" are, to the Russian public, not merely a sensational novelty. Since the enthronement of Emperor Alexander III with his reactionary policy, religious interests, hitherto held in utter neglect in Russian society, have suddenly begun to re-awaken, and this re-awakening will continue throughout the eighties and the nineties. It is during these decades that there will appear in Russia a number of other religious thinkers, from

V. Solovyov to D. Merezhkovsky and V. Rozanov. Thus, Tolstoy's religious writings come opportunely, and interest in them constantly increases. Moreover, perhaps this change in the public mood is, at least in a measure, responsible also for another fact which, imperceptibly, has acquired quite a rôle in Tolstoy's life: during these years Tolstoy has found the disciples for whom he so panted.

Once, in 1882, the doors of Tolstoy's study opened, an elderly man with long, curly hair and blue eyes rushed in, embraced Tolstoy and told him that he was at his disposal. This man was Nicholas Nicholayevich Gay, a very outstanding Russian artist. He had long been tortured by religious longings. Living in his country place, he read Tolstoy's article on the Moscow slums, understood that Tolstoy's Christianity was exactly what he wanted, rode immediately to Moscow, and there he was. Henceforth this naïve idealist would remain Tolstoy's fervent follower and a sincere friend of the whole Tolstoy family.

Tolstoy was happy. Still happier was he, however, when, next year, Vladimir Grigorievich Chertkov, a twenty-nine-year-old officer of the aristocratic *Chevalier-gardes* regiment, came to him and also pronounced himself his unreserved disciple. This young man's story was unusual. The scion of one of Russia's best noble families, a very wealthy squire and a playmate and childhood friend of Emperor Alexander III, Chertkov lived a stormy life of dissipation, gambling, debauchery (being exceptionally beautiful he was the god of the women both of the *grand monde* and of the *demi-monde*). But he came to a sudden pause. He felt the futility of this life and the "immorality" of military service. He persuaded his parents to permit him to resign from his regiment, withdrew to his estates and, living there in complete asceticism, began to work for the peasants. A Christianity similar to Tolstoy's was already ripe in his mind when he became acquainted with Tolstoy's philosophy, which he immediately endorsed. Looking in the young officer's noble, Christ-like face, expressing such calm, unflinching resolution (because of certain formalities, Chertkov still had to wear the uniform), Tolstoy felt that no better disciple could be found: this man had proved his readiness to sacrifice himself to "the truth." Later, Chertkov brought with him his friend, one P. I. Biryukov, a quiet, blond naval officer, who also embraced the religion.

And soon there appeared yet other "faithful," one I. Feinermann, a young and intelligent Jew; one Mlle. Schmidt, an elderly school-teacher, and others. Simple peasants would often come: they came to tell Tolstoy that they liked his preachings. Finally a case of conversion happened in his own family: his twenty-year-old daughter Tanya suddenly wrote to him that she was "with him." Delighted, Tolstoy answered: ". . . To find in my family brothers and sisters, instead of estrangement and deliberate opposition in which I see either indifference—not to me, of course, but to the truth—or the fear of something, is my only dream and possible joy, to which I hitherto not even dared aspire. . . ."

Thus Tolstoy, towards 1885, is the center of a whole little "Tolstoyist" sect which will continue to grow. Gathering in summer at Yassnaya, they not only have endless conversations with "the teacher," but also often work together with him in the fields of this or that peasant; "Grandfather" Gay builds a stove in the cabin of the widow So-and-So; sometimes non-Tolstoyist guests (Yassnaya is now as crowded as Khamovniki) and Tolstoy's children join them; Tolstoy's example is still contagious, and when he is in good mood laughter resounds around him in the fields. The disciples compete among themselves in carrying out the program of "simplification" and asceticism. Chertkov with his wife, for instance, are training their servants "to regard them as brothers" and to dine at the same table with them; and they bitterly complain to Tolstoy that the servants still regard them as lords. Tolstoy is deeply touched; how sad that he cannot do the same thing at Yassnaya! Some of the "faithful" go much further. For instance, Feinermann settles near Yassnaya and not only lives by agricultural work, but also, going to the limit of the Christian program, gives away to the peasants all they ask of him; to do this, he practically had to abandon his wife and child. The disciples surround the teacher with an atmosphere of boundless adoration and admiration, catching and swallowing his each word. Countess Alexandra, who visits Yassnaya once looks at this cult with undisguised irony and, as usual, bluntly expresses it to her friend:

"Quelle effrayante nourriture pour votre orgueil, mon cher ami; je crains que vous ne deveniez un jour comme Nabuchodonosor avant sa conversion!"

He answers with a jest:



TOLSTOY DURING AN ILLNESS IN 1902

"Pourquoi voulez vous que j'en soie fier? Lorsque je vais dans le grand monde [it is so that he now refers to peasant-cabins], ma gloire n'existe pas pour eux,—donc, elle n'existe pas du tout."

But Countess Alexandra is right. He daily tells himself that his fame as a "teacher" is but an unworthy "temptation," and that he is but a weak sinner; yet, fed by the admiration of faithful, his pride grows. Not knowing how to act in some family issue, he writes: ". . . I am like an ambassador in a complicated and difficult situation, and I do not always know how to do best the will of Him who sent me. I will wait for information. He hitherto never refused to give it, and always gave it in time. . . ." He has acquired the tone of a high priest; the Tolstoyists listen in awe.

Sophie Andreyevna is fond of Gay, of the timid, cordial and sincere Biryukov. But, as a rule, she has a strong dislike for Tolstoyists. It seems to her that, by their very presence, they strengthen Tolstoy's zeal in his religion and thereby contribute to the estrangement between him and her. She feels that they look at her without great sympathy, either. Besides, she generally dislikes that kind of people. "There is not a single normal person among them. As for [Tolstoyist] women, they are for the most part hysterical. . . . For instance . . . Mlle. Schmidt sobs hysterically every time she meets Leo Nicholayevich or parts from him. . . ." She has nicknamed them all "the obscure ones,"—a name by which henceforth they often will be referred to in the family. But especially strong is Sophie Andreyevna's dislike for Chertkov.

The fact is that during these three or four years of acquaintance, Tolstoy's friendship with Chertkov has become far more intimate than with any other Tolstoyist. Moreover,—and this is quite unprecedented for the unruly and domineering Tolstoy—he has fallen very much under his young friend's influence.

Chertkov, of course, is fanatically sincere in his Tolstoyism. Moreover, narrow-minded and rather dull-minded, but strong-willed and unconsciously hypocritical, he is a typical ex-cavalry officer in Christianity. Where Tolstoy, too rich in contradictory human longings, hesitates and tortures himself by doubt and self-criticism, everything is simple and clear for Chertkov: he just attacks with calm resolution. Had he lived a few centuries before, he would have developed into an excellent inquisitor sending sinners to *auto-da-fé*. This quality seems to command Tolstoy's

respect; Chertkov becomes for him something of an infallible Tolstoyist conscience impersonate. Moreover, Chertkov is ambitious; as soon as he became a Tolstoyist, his greatest ambition apparently became to occupy, so to speak, the rank of the first Metropolitan of Tolstoyism, of the person standing nearest to Tolstoy; and he began to work in this direction very consistently. Tolstoy's religious works including "What Shall We Do, Then?" remain prohibited. Chertkov has them copied in his house (later on he will keep special secretaries for this purpose) and zealously organizes their circulation. Tolstoy is delighted by this "disinterested" service of "the truth." This, by the way, entails important consequences. The practise imperceptibly establishes itself that all of Tolstoy's philosophic (and later—artistic) manuscripts, after having been copied at Yasnaya, go to Chertkov "for preservation" or "for use" (Chertkov, of course, demonstratively handles them as though they were Holy Script). Thanks to all this, he has become to such an extent Tolstoy's only literary adviser that Tolstoy literally apologizes to him for "wasting time" when he does not write what is most urgent and important, according to Chertkov. Tolstoy needs a confidant to whom to disclose his self-mortifications and sufferings over "the life in sin"; who can be a better confidant than Chertkov? Indeed, Chertkov's firm hands and tone soothe, pat, and caress Tolstoy,—and how tactfully, with what an ever-present tinge of boundless admiration! And Tolstoy is even so tactless as to constantly inform Chertkov of his quarrels with Sophie Andreyevna, and to describe, in letters to him, Yasnaya Polyana as "a depraved and immoral" "mad-house run by madmen." Tolstoy is getting old; and so he leans more and more on his young friend's will-power, in certain things even looks at things more and more through his eyes.

When circumstances permit him, Chertkov, this model of all Tolstoyist virtues, may be high-handed and very rude; many Tolstoyists will complain of that and will dislike him intensely. But in the Tolstoy house itself, he is, or, at least, was in the beginning, kindness and tactfulness itself. Besides, as an experienced society-man, he knows how to charm, to please. At first, Sophie Andreyevna was as much fascinated by him as Tolstoy; she showed him lavish signs of attention, and henceforth he has occupied the place almost of a son in the family. Then, however,

she has become alarmed and jealous of Chertkov's "requisitioning" of her husband's documents: Chertkov imperceptibly has usurped her place. But her indignation is still greater when she comes to believe that Chertkov "is trying to arouse Leo Nicholayevich against me. Thus, in a letter to him, Chertkov speaks of the happiness he finds in the spiritual communion with his wife and expresses his pity over the fact that L. N., so worthy of a similar happiness, is deprived of it. As I read this, I was hurt by this allusion to me. This obstinate, malignant and insincere man who has enveloped Leo Nicholayevich with flatteries wants (perhaps this, too, is Christianity!) to break those ties which, for nearly twenty-five years, have united us. . . ." Indeed, now, as he has definitely entrenched himself in Tolstoy's confidence, Chertkov is not as charming with her by far as he used to be. The situation has thus become clear: Chertkov is the first serious rival in her whole life; a moment may come when he will try to elbow her away from Leo Nicholayevich. She has and will have quarrels with Tolstoy over Chertkov; but of ousting Chertkov she even cannot think,—it is too late. She has to put up with the situation.

But Chertkov is careful, and so far, things go smoothly. Moreover, during the two or three years that followed 1885, Tolstoy is calmer than he was at the beginning of his "new life"; peace, or at least comparative peace, reigns in the family.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO CRUSADES

I

In the summer of 1883, the following letter from Turgenev, written in an uneven, unsteady handwriting, reached Yassnaya:

"MY DEAR AND BELOVED LEO NICHOLAYEVICH!

"I have not written to you for such a long time because, putting it bluntly, I was, and am, on my death-bed. I cannot recover,—it would be useless to entertain any hopes. I am writing to you chiefly to tell you how glad I was to have been your contemporary and to address my last request to you. My friend, return to artistic work! This gift of yours comes from the same source from which all other things come. Oh, how glad I would be if only I knew that my request will impress you! . . . As for me, I am a finished man; the doctors even do not know what to call my ailing . . . I can neither walk, nor eat, nor sleep, but, forsooth! I am bored even to speak of it. My friend, the great writer of the Russian land, heed my entreaties! Let me know whether this piece of paper has reached you, and permit me once more, from all my heart, to embrace you, your wife, all yours . . . Can write no more . . . Am tired."

This time it was not hypochondria. In his villa Les Frênes, at Bougival, near Paris, Turgenev lay motionless, in constant suffering, stricken with a cancer of the spinal cord. Already he often failed to recognize familiar faces. Once when, in the night, Mme. Viardot-Gracia, his ex-mistress and lifelong friend, entered his room, he groaned with horror: "Here is she, Lady Macbeth,"—and hurled a brass bell at her.

A month later Turgenev died. Perhaps those who describe this letter as the most touching document in Russian literary history do not exaggerate very much.

Not only Turgenev, but the public at large have interpreted

Tolstoy's turning to religion as his "renunciation of literature." Many deplored—even publicly, in the press,—the "suicide" of the great writer. But all this was merely a misunderstanding.

Tolstoy did not give up literature, and never made shoes *instead* of writing. But it is perfectly true that his "regeneration" revolutionized his attitude toward art as deeply as it revolutionized his attitude toward life, church, everything. He is "a new man"; he is also "a new artist."

II

Tolstoy is now dissatisfied with all of his preceding literary career; moreover, he is dissatisfied with contemporary art in general; here, as elsewhere, "men have gone astray"; and he, while he was "blind," has gone astray too.

First of all, he is roused to indignation by the socially economic side of modern art. As we already know, he cannot think without pain of the fact that he "plundered the people" by receiving large sums of money for his writings. And look at the public theaters "which—one shrinks with horror at the thought—cost our Government millions of roubles . . . and which keep thousands of laborers working and toiling day and night." And what is the purpose of these sacrifices? Just "to tickle the nerves of a handful of 'selected ones.'" No, of all the "crimes and follies" of our civilization this is perhaps the most hideous one.

But Tolstoy's dissatisfaction is not as simple as that—it goes much deeper. The fact is that a whole new philosophy of art has ripened in his mind. He will fully express this philosophy only ten years later in two special books, in "What Is Art?" and in "On Shakespeare and the Drama." But this philosophy is clearly crystallized already (it is now, too, by the way, that the first of these two works is conceived, but postponed). What is this philosophy?

All philosophers of esthetics define art as the pursuit of beauty. Tolstoy rejects this view. First of all, he says, beauty is nothing more than the sum total of our likes, which vary from man to man. It is for this reason that each philosopher of esthetics defines it in his own way, and is contradicted by all others. But even apart from this the definition is incorrect: art has nothing to do with beauty. Art is merely a medium for the *transmission of emotion*. "It is an activity by which one man deliberately, by

means of certain external signs, transmits to other men a feeling which he has experienced, so that these men, by contagion, also live through it." In art Tolstoy's words are weighty; and one can hardly deny that this theory has some very strong points; for, indeed, who can deny that each one of us reacts to art precisely through this emotional channel? So far, Tolstoy's theory has been purely technical, academic; but see how he now links it with his philosophy in general. If art is the language of feelings, a good work of art must "infect" the largest number of people; it must be all-human; a peasant must understand it as well as a "civilized" man, for the emotional machinery is the same in all men. Therefore, art intelligible only to the few is bad art. In order to be all-human, art must be *simple*. Tolstoy has always had a very definite artistic taste. He liked the classical, the rational, the primitive. He had an aversion for everything romantic, ornate, baroque. It is for this reason that he is so fond of Homer and the Bible, of Russian folk-lore, of the analytic clearness of Stendhal, of Mozart and Haydn; it is for this reason, too, that he disliked the Elizabethan flourishes of Shakespeare and the intricacies of Goethe. Now, however, this is to Tolstoy not merely a taste, but a rationally justifiable principle. He demands from art utmost simplicity. Too much technique, too much detail in descriptions, too much magnificence and complication inevitably undermine the all-humanness of a work of art by obscuring the emotion to be transmitted and by bewildering an uneducated reader (or listener, or looker). The shorter, the barer, the better. What feelings are worthy of being transmitted? Only good ones, of course. Chiefly—"the feelings expressing man's religious aspirations at the present stage of the development of mankind"; but also all other feelings which make man better, which spread love among men ("positive" art), or which teach man to abhor the evil (satirical art).

Such, in brief, is Tolstoy's doctrine. The meaning of these three prerequisite conditions—emotional element, intelligibility to all and good morals—is clear: the re-born Tolstoy has rationalistically devised the scheme of such an art which would fully satisfy the Christian in him by reaching all men and by educating them in the feelings of "true Christianity." Indeed, "the lofty function of art," he says, "consists in helping to unite men in love and brotherhood."

It is from the viewpoint of this doctrine that Tolstoy looks at the whole field of modern art. Does it satisfy his prerequisite conditions? No. No? If so, help, save! Here, too, men are headed for perdition; he, to whom alone the full truth is revealed, must save them, must "disclose the evil," must show them their mistakes.

On its appearance, "What Is Art?" will create an impression like the explosion of a bomb-shell. Its critical part abounds in such vehement, angry and passionate attacks on modern art as one could hardly expect even from Tolstoy.

"No matter how terrible it may be to say it, there has happened to the art of our time and educated class that which happens to a woman who begins to sell her feminine attractiveness, intended by nature for motherhood, for the amusement of those who fall for amusements of such kind. Our art has become a prostitute. This comparison is accurate to the smallest details. Like a prostitute, it is never limited by time; like her, it is always painted up, it is to be bought and sold, it is luring and pernicious. Real works of art can be born in the artist's soul only seldom, as a fruit of his preceding life,—as, indeed, a child in the mother's womb. But works of pseudo-art can be turned out by the specialists of this job as often as you wish, provided there is a demand. Real art needs no adornment; pseudo-art must always be decked with imitation jewels and make-up . . ."

Who can deny that in this tirade, there is a grain, or even more than a grain, of truth? Indeed, in art, Tolstoy's eye is sharp, his words cutting and to the point; such evils as art's commercialism, as the tendency of the modern novel to hide the absence of genuine emotional essence behind the striking, the exotic, the artificially "powerful," the naked feminine bodies and "thrilling" scenes,—he reveals with great paradoxical brilliancy.

But Tolstoy cannot stop there. Spurred on by his passion for revealing error, he begins to break one idol after another, to erase them all from the face of the earth. Shakespeare? Instead of saying that he does not like him, he declares most categorically: "Shakespeare may have been anything you want, but he certainly was not an artist"; his tragedies "can provoke nothing but disgust and boredom." Richard Wagner? But Richard Wagner is the worst imaginable form of pseudo-art; he, Tolstoy, could not stand more than two acts of "Siegfried": "from a composer who wrote

that boresome nonsense, no real music can be expected." And thus all is destroyed from Michelangelo to French poets—*Décadents*, and even to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: Tolstoy knows for certain that this symphony is harmful "because it brings about disunion among men" (it is true that he likes certain other things by Beethoven, and regards them as true art). How does he prove these statements? Tolstoy knows the truth, and to prove it all is not difficult: Shakespeare and Wagner, the *Décadents* and the Ninth Symphony are too technical and "burdened with details" to be understood by the Russian peasant; besides, they do not "infect" him, Tolstoy, with a sincere emotion; if so, there can be no mistake in the diagnoses: they are not art. And he spits the fire of angry, scornful irony and wrath against those who would tell him that they like Shakespeare, the Ninth Symphony or Michelangelo; he does not believe in their sincerity; reason is the same in all men, consequently all must think like him; if they do not, they lie. The fact that by his criticism, he rises against world-wide fame only adds to his destructive zeal. His enmity for "generally accepted ideas" has reached its climax; he is suspicious; he sees in all of them "superstitions poisoning mankind"; and to stand alone on the summit of truth and from the vantage point of this eminence to disperse superstitions is flattering to his unconscious pride. World-wide fame is an especially "harmful" superstition. It is "one of those epidemic mental diseases to which men always have been subject. Such were medieval crusades, the belief in witchcraft, the search for the philosopher's stone, the passion for tulips . . . With the development of the daily press such epidemics have become especially striking." Another example of such superstitions, he adds with a coldly ironical shrug of the shoulders, is "the belief of men of our time in science." The angry dislike of the ignorant sixteen-year-old university student for science still survives, and always will survive, in Tolstoy; only now, this dislike, like so many other whims, has also been raised to the rank of an absolute truth and incorporated into his general philosophy: science, you see, is "un-Christian"; it teaches men to build factories "which no one needs" and which "destroy love" in mankind, to make abortions and to perpetrate other "crimes." But to enumerate all the absurdities with which Tolstoy sparkles in "What Is Art?" would be impossible.

What does he say of "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina"? In his smashing of idols, the "Troglodyte" is as noble and lordly as in anything else; he only waves his hand: "Absolutely insignificant works."

Thus, the old buildings are torn down, and the ground is cleared. What is going to come next? How can modern art "save itself"? Where is the right road? First of all, Tolstoy sees some bright exceptions, even in the contaminated field of modern writings. Although with reservations, he approves of Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo, George Eliot ("Adam Bede"), Dickens, and especially Molière. But, on the whole, he has little hope for art such as it exists,—for professional art. Art must cease to be a profession. In the future Christian society, he prognosticates, art will no longer be confined to books, museums, theaters. "The future artist will understand that to compose a fairy-tale, a song, a joke, a maxim which can touch or amuse a child is infinitely more important than to compose novels, symphonies and dramas which, after having amused a few people of the rich class, will be forgotten by all." All children "will learn the foundations of the arts in the schools"—will be equipped with enough technique to operate freely in the arts. And every talented man who experiences a sincere urge to convey a feeling to his fellow-men will be at such moments—and only at such moments—an artist. Professionalism in art will be forgotten. Art will return into daily life, will freely permeate this life. What a beautiful, touching and fantastic dream!

Meanwhile, with a new artistic faith Tolstoy lives in the old world; how will he apply his principles to his own artistic work?

III

In 1885, Chertkov decided to publish a weekly for peasants, which would propagate the principles of "true Christianity" among them. Tolstoy long ago painfully felt his "indebtedness to the people" and wished to "repay the Russian peasant for the fifty years' room-and-board he gave me." He joyfully agreed to collaborate in Chertkov's review. But the authorities refused to permit its publications. Chertkov and Tolstoy, however, devised a new plan. There exists in Russia the so-called "*bast-box*" literature; pedlers going to villages to sell needles, threads, kerchiefs, etc., usually carry in their boxes also cheap oleographs and illus-

trated booklets: of course, in the literary sense, this is usually terrific trash. Now, the two friends approached Sytin, a Moscow publisher; they offered gradually to replace the "*bast-box*" stuff he published with the things which they would give him. Sytin agreed. Thus, a special publishing company called "*Posrednik*," "The Intermediary" was formed, with Tolstoy as its leading mind and Chertkov as its manager.

Tolstoy's work for "The Intermediary" is primarily editorial: he revises and rewrites scores of general educational articles, religious things, stories, etc., written by others, chiefly by Tolstoyists. But this is not all.

By this time he has already quite a few "tales for the people" of his own in his desk. The idea of such tales already interested him from the pedagogical point of view at the time of his "Alphabet."

Then he forgot it for years. But now, when his new artistic views have ripened, he naturally has come back to it. An indefatigable observer, during his long walks in the country, he has tirelessly jotted down legends he heard from his casual acquaintances, peasant proverbs and expressions, sketches of interesting types and ideas. Thus, a rich material has accumulated in his note-books. He begins to experiment. Now, as "The Intermediary" is at his disposal, the incentive of "useful moral purpose" is added to it. He goes to work seriously and writes during these years a long series of "People's Tales."

Doctrines may mutilate Tolstoy in life; but in art he is omnipotent; and, even in spite of his new artistic doctrine, he conquers; these stories, of from four to six thousand words each, are consummate little masterpieces.

They can be best described as parables reminiscent of the Bible (it is not for nothing that Tolstoy regards the Biblical story of Joseph as the greatest masterpiece man has ever written), or of the Gospels. Their subjects are taken from Russian (or Oriental) folk-legends, or else are imaginative. They are told in a peasant language, but in an ideally purified one; Tolstoy reproduces the peasant's occasional characteristic repetitions, his good-natured, tender and rough humor, the very spirit of his speech; but he omits irregularities, dialect-distortions; the result is a tongue of crystalline purity and classical clearness: in such a lan-

guage as God might speak to men. Of course, one recognizes in the tales the Herculean muscles of Tolstoy's talent: but how strikingly his methods have changed! He seems to have deliberately transformed himself into a new being: psychological analysis, the detailed painting of numerous characters and things, etc., all these usual weapons in which he so excelled, are dropped entirely: ascetic sobriety of words; utmost brevity and energetic briskness of design deprived of a single ornament,—such are the new characteristics of his narrative; a beauty more chaste and unostentatious than that of "The Tales" can hardly be conceived. The moral grows out of each story as an architecturally necessary cupola; to be more exact, it is not even the morals, but a powerful wave of love which, at a certain point, suddenly submerges the whole story: for Christian love is, in the last analysis, the only subject of "The Tales." It throbs alike in the workshop of the poor and kind-hearted cobbler, who, from his window in the basement, sees only the feet of passers-by and whom Christ visits, disguised in the form of beggars whom the cobbler helps ("Wherever There Is Love, There Is God"); in the story of the peasants bearing with patience the cruelty of their overseer ("Not In Strength Is God, But In Truth"); etc.

It is with these gems—for which, of course, he does not receive a cent of money—that Tolstoy "repays" the Russian peasant. The thought that they go out into the country in millions of copies gladdens him. At last he is not "quite useless."

IV

In the fall of 1886, Tolstoy hurts his leg. He pays no attention to it, but, a few days later, an abscess develops, his temperature rises, and Tolstoy lies for some time between life and death, threatened with general blood-poisoning. Finally, after an operation, he slowly begins to recover.

In October, one A. A. Stakhovich, an old friend of Tolstoy's, a courtier and wealthy landlord, visits him. Being a lover of the theater and a talented reader, he amuses his bed-ridden host by reading Ostrovsky's plays to him. Three weeks later, returning from his estate to Petersburg, Stakhovich again stops at Yassnaya. Tolstoy, walking with crutches, but already in an easy-chair, greets him: "How glad I am that you should have come! By

your reading you have stirred me up. Since you left, I wrote a drama!"

A year ago, Tolstoy heard from the attorney of the Tula Court of Justice of the murder of an illegitimate child by its father, a peasant. He became so interested in the subject that he carefully noted it. After Stakhovich's first visit, the thing ripened in his mind into a drama; unable to write himself, he began to dictate it to Sophie Andreyevna; and thus, profiting by the leisure afforded by his illness, he finished it without difficulty in two and a half weeks.

The play thus written is that very "Power of Darkness" which, later, will acquire such fame on the stages of the world. A moral idea—the cumulative power of the sin which, once committed, relentlessly pushes man to further and further degradation—lies at the bottom of it. The plot is tied around the illicit love between Nikita, who is fundamentally not a bad, but a weak-willed and lustful young peasant, and Anissya, a married peasant woman flaming with a fatal passion for him. The impressiveness and power of the play lie in that iron necessity, in that inescapable step-after-step psychological logic with which this—fundamental—sin leads Nikita to a chain of subsequent sins and crimes. He becomes Anissya's accomplice in the poisoning of her husband, and marries her; having married her, he begins to hate her for the crime he and she committed, and this is the first glimpse of his awakening conscience; but he tries to drown remorse in wine and debauchery—hideous scenes during which he beats and abuses her follow; this process of his moral downfall, transfused by Tolstoy into dramatic action with the convincingness of a stone rolling faster and faster downhill, culminates in the horrible night during which, "to hide the sin," Nikita strangles and buries in the cellar the child which Anissya's step-daughter, whom he has seduced, bore him. In this painting of ineluctability, the play reminds one of "Anna Karenina," only in a more brisk and brutal form; too, one is tempted to compare it with Sophocles's or Racine's tragedies. What is striking is this: here and there warm, kind human feelings sparkle in the play; they constantly burn in the touching Christian heart's wisdom of Akim, the half-witted, stammering father of Nikita; they often flash in other heroes, too—in those wonderfully and laconically portrayed heroes—none of whom is drawn as an altogether bad man. Yet, on the whole,

how terribly dark is the whole spectacle! Infinite is Tolstoy's artistic honesty: philosophically, he may sugar-coat the Russian peasant; but, artistically, he draws him with absolute realistic veracity. Nikita's mother who, piously crossing herself, persuades her son, shrinking with horror before his last crime, to go and commit it; fist-blows, invectives, superstitions, untold cruelty,—such is the background of the play. And only when, unable to stifle his conscience any longer, Nikita falls on his knees, confesses “to all the Christian world” his crimes and gives himself up to the authorities (as, by the way, the real criminal did also), this world of “blind cubs wallowing in manure” is suddenly transfigured by the all-transfiguring power of love into the world of humanity, God's face suddenly shines forth over this spectacle of darkness.

Tolstoy wrote this play not for “gentlemen,” but with the hope that it would be played by peasant-performers in the “*balagans*” (a sort of open-air stage) of villages and market places. During the course of Tolstoy's recovery, an experiment is made in Yassnaya: the play is read to peasants. About forty of them gather in the evening in the drawing-room; the whole Tolstoy family is present; it is Stakhovich who reads. Somewhat embarrassed and uneasy, the peasants listen in silence.

When the reading is finished, Tolstoy asks an elderly peasant, his favorite pupil, his impression of the play; and the answer he received was:

“What shall I tell you, Leo Nicholayevich? At first Nikita managed his affairs cleverly, but in the end he proved to be a fool.”

“Proved to be a fool”—by repenting . . .

The peasants are dismissed. Tolstoy asks no more questions. He is plunged into deep gloom by this unexpected and killing answer. What if all that he is writing “to repay the peasant” is understood in like manner?

Some time later, Stakhovich happens to read the play to a different audience, in different surroundings. He reads it in the Petersburg palace of Count Vorontzov; in the brilliant array of guests present, the colossal, awkward and majestic figure of Emperor Alexander III surrounded by Grand Dukes stands out. Before the reading is begun, the Emperor comes up to Stakhovich and, picking up the manuscript, says: “It lay on my desk for a

whole week, but I had no time to read it; please read without omitting anything."

The fact is that "The Power of Darkness" was prohibited by the censorship on account of "the cynicism of the expressions, the scenes unbearable for the nerves, etc." (Russia, too, lives in a sort of a Victorian age.) But, as soon as copies of it reached the capital, it began to be read in one aristocratic salon after the other, winning general admiration everywhere. The clamor of the Petersburgian society in favor of the play reached such a point that the Emperor became interested in it; it is for him that its present reading has been organized.

When Stakhovich finishes, a deep silence falls: all eyes turn with expectation to the Emperor, who has been listening and making notes with utmost attention. After a long pause he says:

"A wonderful play!"

By these words mouths are unsealed; all voices fuse in one enthusiastic clamor of praise.

The censorship, of course, removes its ban; and when the play appears in bookstores, 250,000 copies of it sell in three days. Its production on the stage will be authorized, however, only ten years later (in 1895).

Sophie Andreyevna beams with prideful joy. Tolstoy, astonished by this triumph, jests: "If I had known that there would be so much talk about it, I would have tried to write it better!"

What an ironical fate is it, however, for a "people's writer" to be so extolled by cultured people, especially after the rebuff of the Yassnopolyanian reading! Indeed, Tolstoy cannot get over it. And he avenges himself by grumbling against those who praise him:

"These men of our class, to what reactions their indolence prompts them! . . . to make such a fuss over this play!"

v

In these, and especially in the following years, there appears in Tolstoy a strange new characteristic. The older he becomes, the more often and volubly he speaks about the sex problem. And he speaks of it with ever-growing irritation and intolerance.

Of course, there is nothing astonishing in the fact that he should condemn sexual life in principle. We know that complete ab-

stention is the ideal which logically grows out of his general religious doctrine. This has been an axiom to him ever since his regeneration: "Sexual love . . . is a service of self, and consequently, in any case, an obstacle to the service of God and man, and, therefore, from the Christian viewpoint, a fall, a sin."

Now, however, in his conversations, he goes further. He admits, for instance, that marriage is the "least evil" of sexual relations, that it is preferable to the sexual promiscuity of unmarried men. Yet, how pessimistically, cruelly, even cynically he speaks even of this "least evil"! "Those," he soon will say, "who write novels ending with marriage, as though marriage were such a good thing that, after it, nothing were left for description, spread terrific nonsense. If a comparison is needed, marriage ought to be compared with a funeral, not with a happy holiday." Love between man and woman does not exist; it is an unpardonable misuse of words; that which is hidden behind the word is merely sexual attraction. The sexual instinct is the greatest deceiver in the world: when man and woman are attracted to each other physically, their sight is distorted, they see in each other only qualities; when, however, after they are married, this instinct is satisfied and needs to lie no longer, the mirage disappears; they begin to realize that they are each other's prisoners, that they must bear each other's sins, vices, "anger, filth, smell, ulcers, illness"; the feeling of secret mutual enmity appears, and leads to quarrels, scandals, scenes of jealousy. It is true that, in this dark "sea" there are "islands" when the sexual instinct reawakens, throws them again into each other's arms, again creates lying mirages. But the older the husband and wife become, the less numerous become such islands, the darker becomes this sea. And this is the general rule of every marriage; for, fettered to each other, two human beings are logically bound to hinder each other; cases when both would always make identical movements, have identical tastes and opinions, are one to million. Hence, "man lives through earthquakes, epidemics, various horrible diseases and spiritual sufferings; but the most torturing of all tragedies that can befall him was, is and always will be the tragedy of the bedroom." And, pronouncing such speeches, he sometimes looks in the direction of Sophie Andreyevna.

But with especial cruelty Tolstoy speaks of women. His opinion of them "has fallen very low," yet, he notes, he "must

make it fall still lower." He fully shares the view of medieval ascetics—that she is "the devil's instrument." "Only husbands," he also will note, "come to know woman really well (and when it is too late). Only they see her behind the stage. It is for this reason that, as Lessing puts it, all husbands think: 'There was but one bad woman in the world, and it is her that I have had the luck to marry . . .'" Conscious and unconscious "sexual allurements and catching of man" through smiles, music, feigned spiritual interests, physical display, etc., is the only thing he sees in her.

Indeed, how strange it is to hear all this in the mouth of the former patriarch, of the former singer of "married happiness," of the creator of Natasha Rostov and of Kitty Scherbiatzky, with their touching femininity! One may change one's ideas; one may preach uncompromising abstention; one even may be extremely one-sided—in Tolstoy it is not astonishing. But why return to this subject so often? Why speak on these themes with such unusual vehemence? Moreover, formerly so chaste, in his speech, he now often uses in his anti-sex diatribes—even in the presence of ladies—crude, even indecent peasant expressions.

Here, apparently, we are confronted with one of the most serious conflicts into which Tolstoy has been drawn by his creed. "Complete abstention." But we know that, in the second year of his "new life," Sophie Andreyevna gave birth to one of their younger sons; that in 1884, at the time when misunderstandings were especially serious between them, his daughter Alexandra came to the world; finally now, in 1888, their *thirteenth* (including the ones who died) and last child, the boy Vanichka [Ivan] was born. One is led to believe that, ever since the first years, his inability to abide by this clause of his own teachings worried him. But it is apparently now that this worry becomes especially serious. He is sixty-two, sixty-three; but his flesh remains untamed.

After a bright respite, his relations with Sophie Andreyevna have again grown worse. In 1887, when, in the presence of unnumbered guests, the "silver" anniversary of their wedding was celebrated, he found only these icy words to commemorate in his diary the twenty-five years of their married life: "It might have been better."

The situation seems to become especially strained in 1890. It

is painful to read Sophie Andreyevna's entries for this year. "Days and weeks pass," she writes, "during which we do not say a word to each other. Sometimes, prompted by old habit, I come up to him with my thoughts and interests, with a question about a book, or the children, or the like; and I read a cold, astonished rebuff in his eyes: 'So you still hope, and annoy me with your stupidity!' I, who am innocent before him, who have done him no wrong, who love him,—I fear him as though I were a criminal . . ." She writes other things, too, however. She tells how reconciliations come. They come on the "islands" of periodical sexual rapprochement. "His coldness and unfriendliness have melted away—all has ended the way it usually ends . . ." "Alas! If without *it* his attitude toward me were as kind! Unfortunately, without it, it is usually so different!" She feels deeply hurt. And she will note such "reconciliations" time and again in the years to come.

Does Sophie Andreyevna write the truth? At this stage of her life her nerves are already often on edge, she is more unbalanced than ever before. She may exaggerate. But we have not the slightest reason to doubt the fundamental veracity of her words.

Now, his preaching of asceticism, his anti-sexual diatribes, and this peculiarity of his own matrimonial relations—what does the juxtaposition of all these facts mean? That he tortures himself for having failed to vanquish his "lust"? That, realizing that it is his own "sin," he yet punishes his wife for it, avenging himself for his "downfalls" by long spells of virtuous coldness to her? That, doing so, he sees at the same time how cruel it all is? And that, seeing it, he breaks out into all the more intolerant cursing of the sex? Yes, there can be hardly any doubt that the complex of his feelings and logic is about that. Is there not, however, one more thing too? Are his anti-sexual diatribes not an expression of his suppressed sexualism which now, at his decline, blazes in him with especial force, as it often blazes before its senile extinction, and which, to escape the control of his Christian mind, masquerades under the form of condemnation?

VI

In 1887, Tolstoy sketched a story in which the hero's, Pozdnyshév's, wife is seduced by an artist; the lovers are surprised by the husband during a love scene. The idea of the story was suggested

to him by a woman of a Slavonic nationality who wrote him a letter in which she asked his advice regarding certain aspects of the sex problem. Sophie Andreyevna disliked intensely the "disgusting, Zola-like" naturalism of the sketch (as she disliked all his "sexual" conversations in general). Tolstoy seemed to be hurt by her criticism. Yet, he put the story aside and, apparently, forgot it.

But a year and a half later, guests gathered one night at Tolstoy's; among them were Ryepin, the famous artist, and Andreyev-Burlak, a talented dramatic actor. Count Serge Lvovich, Tolstoy's oldest son, played—he was a good musician—together with the violinist Lasotta, Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata." Tolstoy was deeply impressed by it.

"Let us interpret this sonata," he said to Ryepin; "I will write a story, Andreyev-Burlak will read it at a public gathering, and you will paint a canvas which will stand on the stage while he reads."

For various reasons, nothing would come of this collective interpretation. But Tolstoy did his part of the work: he came back to the abandoned sketch, rewrote it and enlarged it into a novelette. Only now, the seducer of Pozdnyshev's wife became a violinist instead of an artist, and the "Kreutzer Sonata," which, at a *soirée*, they played together, became the last necessary influence, which, acting on her already excited sensuality, decided her to give herself to him and thus brought about the whole tragedy (for, having apprehended them, Pozdnyshev killed her).

It is thus, then, that "The Kreutzer Sonata"—for so Tolstoy entitled his novelette—came into being.

The "Sonata" is to this day one of the most widely read of Tolstoy's works both in Europe and America. It is more than often referred to as "Tolstoy's crowning masterpiece." Is this a right appraisal? Hardly so. The novelette, no doubt, is terrifically impressive; but esthetically it is imperfect, a fact which Tolstoy himself realized and admitted. It is written in the form of a dialogue: "I," the narrator, meets, on a trip in a railroad wagon, a man who happens to be Pozdnyshev; drawn into conversation, he tells "I" why and how he committed the crime which now lies in a distant past. The trouble is that, at the beginning, Tolstoy uses Pozdnyshev as his mouthpiece: he makes him go into long philosophizings on all favorite Tolstoyan subjects, from the harm

of smoking and eating meat to the "criminality" of the doctors who have invented abortion. These digressions, not sufficiently integrated, often spoil the narrative. Further on, however, as Pozdnyshv concentrates on the story, it becomes better and better. And the description of the tragedy itself, from the moment when the first suspicions entered his mind to the protracted agony of uncertainty, "Was she unfaithful to me, or not?" and, finally, to the night when, maddened with rage, he forced the dagger under his wife's ribs ("I felt and I remember the momentary resistance of the corset and then the sinking of the dagger into something soft . . ."),—reads in one breath, in one gulp. This part of the novelette, as a painting of "carnal" jealousy is, beyond doubt, a classic,—perhaps almost as much as "Othello." What increases the strength of the impression is the tone of Pozdnyshv's narrative. Now, after years of bitter repentance, he is something like a Tolstoyist Christian; and yet, how strikingly the lustful sensualist of the old days still lives in him! How typical is the very nervous tic which twitches his gloomy face, the very brief, sensual grunt,—half-laugh and half-groan,—which, from time to time, he emits from his throat! Reviving the story of his crime, he burns with torture; and yet his hands still tremble with greedy jealousy, with the rage of a deceived male.

Around the time of the writing of the novelette, Tolstoy told one of his friends: "It is a joy for me to remember that, both on my own and on my wife's part, there has never been even the slightest infidelity, and that we have lived a clean and honest family life." Indeed, in its *facts*, "The Kreutzer Sonata" is not in the least autobiographic. Yet, who could fail to identify in Pozdnyshv much that was Tolstoy! Not only that the sensualism, the anti-sexual diatribes, etc., coincide, but is this incomparable painting of jealousy not the painting of the frequent jealousies through which Tolstoy himself so often lived, at the beginning of his married life?

Typical also is the rôle allotted to music in the novelette. Remembering that night of the "Kreutzer Sonata" which decided his fate, Pozdnyshv says: "Do you know the first *presto* of this sonata? O-o-h, what a terrible thing! . . . What a terrible thing is music, generally speaking! . . . Whence comes its power? . . . In China music is controlled by the State, and it is exactly so that it ought to be. How can it be permitted that any man should

hypnotize others [through it], and then do with them what he pleases? . . .” We know from witnesses what a tremendous power music wielded over Tolstoy himself. When he played or heard music, “he paled slightly,” his eyes dilated, his “face was distorted by a sort of a grimace of pain or fright.” Perhaps it is for this reason that he will attack its “immorality” with such vehemence in “What Is Art?”

What is the moral message of “The Kreutzer Sonata”? The public bombards Tolstoy with letters asking this question. And, on Chertkov’s advice, he writes an explanatory article, “The Postscript To ‘The Kreutzer Sonata,’” in which he sets forth his philosophy of sex. Its main principles we know; it remains to sum up its practical side. Chastity is, of course, the ideal. But men are weak, men are human. Tolstoy realizes that this ideal is above human strength. Does that mean, however, as some conclude, that it must be rejected? Not at all; those who conclude so merely do not understand what the word ideal means. “Man striving after Christ’s ideal is like a man carrying before him a lantern on a long stick”: the light will always be ahead of him, will always elude him, and yet, like a star, it will lead him, will show him the right path through the darkness. What is the practical solution? For a chaste boy or girl to abstain as long as he or she can; if he (or she) falls—to marry that woman (or man) with whom he (or she) has fallen, and let this union be indissoluble forever (Tolstoy admits no divorce). Moreover, let them even in marriage strive to establish the “chaste relations of a brother and sister,” regarding each “fall” as a sin. Pozdnyshv killed his wife not when he stabbed her with the dagger, but when, marrying her pure and innocent, he established in her the conviction that “piggish” sexual pleasures were something legitimate and even praiseworthy; this was her moral murder, the murder of God in her (and most husbands thus murder their wives “in our civilization”); from this adoption by her of the attitude “of apes and Parisians” in sexual matters to her unfaithfulness to her husband, was but a step (hence all the “sexual” tragedies in our society). It may be asked: if, accepting the Christian philosophy in earnest, men, after generations, finally achieve chastity, how will mankind continue? True to himself, Tolstoy answers with animation: “And why should it continue?” Life in



A FAMILY DINNER AT YASSNAYA IN 1906

Top row. Dr. D. Makovicky, Countess A. L. Tolstoy, Mlle. Igumnov, V. G. Chertkov, Tolstoy
Bottom row: Princess M. L. Obolensky, Countess M. N. Tolstoy, Sophie Andreyevna

itself is senseless; it has sense only as *moral progress*, as movement towards Christ's ideal. Mankind must continue only as long as it is imperfect, as long as it has passions. "The strongest, most cruel and persistent of these passions is the sexual passion, bodily love. Therefore, if all passions are conquered, including the last and strongest of them, the prophecies will be fulfilled, mankind's purpose will have been attained, and there will be no sense for it to live on." Freed of its conquered body, mankind will fuse with God.

"The Kreutzer Sonata," too, is prohibited by the "moral" censorship. Yet, as a work dealing with a *risqué* subject, it acquires, in hundreds of thousands of hectographed copies, a fame even greater than "The Power of Darkness."

Sophie Andreyevna dislikes the novelette intensely, almost hates it. Not only that its crudeness shocks her—in their early married years Tolstoy himself zealously brought her up in strictly prudish, Victorian tastes; at his request, she even did not read Zola until quite recently. What grieves her more is that, in her opinion, the public will unavoidably identify in Pozdnyshév—Tolstoy, in Pozdnyshév's jealousy—Tolstoy's jealousy, in the Pozdnyshévs' scenes—their family scenes. The novelette, she feels, will be accepted as a scandalous indiscretion. She hears that, seeing a pregnant woman, people already jest in Moscow society: "*Voilà le véritable 'Post-Script' de la Sonate de Kreutzer!*" She is afraid "to become pregnant again,"—what a pretext it would be for everybody to discuss their family life, to sneer over "the great Christian"! She is right—there is a great deal of foul gossip in the capitals. But she is so irritated that her irritation leads her to a very foolish decision. "In order to clear her reputation before the children," she writes a novel, "Whose Guilt Is It?" which must serve as an answer to "The Kreutzer Sonata." If, in "The Kreutzer Sonata," the guilt of the estrangement and constant quarrels of husband and wife is equally divided between them, in her novel all of the guilt is thrust upon the husband. This husband, Prince Prozorovsky, is pictured as a rake in his youth and as a no better, brutal sensualist in marriage (incidentally, in her sad moments, Sophie Andreyevna now accuses Tolstoy, in her diary, of having never *loved* her, of having always been interested "only in my body"). It is, generally speaking, not diffi-

cult to guess that a great many facts quoted in the novel are autobiographic. Sophie Andreyevna wanted absolutely to publish her work. One can imagine what a terrific scandal would have followed. Fortunately, friends and relatives persuaded her not to do it.

But a year has passed; she has cooled off and forgotten her resentment. Moreover, at the beginning of 1891, she rides to Petersburg, obtains an interview with the Emperor and, after a long conversation, persuades him to lift the ban of censorship from the "Sonata." She bursts with joy over her success. Her devotion to "Lyovochka's" fame prevails, in the last account, over the offense over that "injustice" which, as she still feels, he did her by writing the novelette.

VII

But "The Kreutzer Sonata" is not the only work of this kind he wrote.

Already in 1886, Tolstoy wrote another novelette, "Ivan Ilyich's Death"; marriage is treated in it in the same spirit as in the "Sonata" (although its main subject is different). Moreover, now, he writes two more novelettes,—"The Devil" (in 1889) and "Father Serge" (in 1890). Both of them, again, deal with sex. Thus, *four times in succession*, Tolstoy comes back to the same question, with striking persistence.

Still more striking, however, is the light in which sex is pictured in these two last novelettes. Sex appears in them as an ineluctable power, as an iron hand, a curse, which pushes man to horror, misfortune, crime. In "The Devil," the landlord Irtenyev, who has a charming and beloved wife, is fired with such strong physical attraction for a peasant woman with whom, before his marriage, he had a liaison, that, unable to struggle, he, according to one version (there are two versions of the ending), kills himself, and, according to the other—kills her, "the devil." In "Father Serge," carnal desire tortures Prince Kassatzky, who has become a monk (Father Serge) and almost a saint; the struggle he puts up is almost superhuman; once, for instance, tempted by a woman, and unable to withstand the temptation, he seizes an ax and chops off his finger; and yet, even this iron ascetic falls, and falls terribly—with an innocent half-idiot girl who cannot be held responsible for her actions . . . Colossal, indeed, in Tolstoy's

eyes, is the power of "the devil" with whom he vainly, hopelessly and yet obstinately struggles.

It is significant that he keeps both these novelettes unpublished in his drawer: they will appear only after his death. It is interesting also that, as he himself told it, in the peasant woman of "The Devil" he portrayed, at least outwardly, that peasant woman with whom he had a protracted liaison before his marriage.

A few words remain to be said of Tolstoy's esthetic methods in this—late—period of his creative work. To a certain extent, we are already familiar with them from "What Is Art?" and "The Tales." Energetic, "to the point," rapidity in the development of the plot; sharp clearness of architectural lines; a narrative so collected and pulled together as to remind one—to use Romain Rolland's expression—"of a tiger ready to jump"; such are the characteristics of these novelettes, and, in general, of most of the things Tolstoy writes in his old age. It is true that "The Kreutzer Sonata" and "Ivan Ilyich's Death" do not wholly conform to this type: the first of them, as we have already noted, is spoiled by digressions; and both abound in psychological analysis which relates them to the earlier periods of Tolstoy's works. But "The Devil" and "Father Serge" are perfectly sustained samples of the new method. Both are impeccable literary achievements, the late Tolstoy at his best. Here, however, an interesting detail must be noted. All four novelettes are written in a very simple language, yet in a literary, not "popular" language; all of them may be understood by any cultured reader, yet exactly by a *cultured* reader: they are obviously not for "the people," not for "all." Why should Tolstoy make this digression from his principle? Why should he again become a writer "for the few"? Well . . . The universal type of his "Tales" is lofty, but, apparently, the form is too narrow, too strait-jacket-like; a cultured artist of our time needs more complicated forms of narrative and speech to give expression to all he has to say. And so here, as elsewhere, Tolstoy had to deviate from his theory, had to become a "professional" writer once more.

At about the same time, two of Tolstoy's children, Countess Tatyana and Count Leo, return from Paris; both are fond of the theater and want to stage something at home. Approached by them and their young friends in one of his happy moods, he

agrees to finish for them a comedy which once, in a time of leisure, he sketched. He works for a couple of days and it is ready. Its title is "The Fruit of Enlightenment."

This is a bright exception, a contrast to the gloomy background of his other works of this period. The comedy, a charming theatrical trifle, is laughter from beginning to end. Spun around the passion of a dignified old gentleman for spiritualism and around the tricks by which his mediums dupe him, it is a satire of Russian aristocratic society, but a satire so merry, mild and innocently good-natured as one could hardly expect from the author of "The Kreutzer Sonata." Published, it will become, for years to come, the favorite comedy of the Russian public.

Meanwhile, it is being rehearsed by the Yassnopolyanian amateurs. After having written it, Tolstoy grumbles over having been drawn into these "gentlemen's fancies," and groans in a letter: "To see such a lot of money spent on its staging while peasants wallow in misery! . . ." Yet, when he is present at the rehearsals, he forgets his moralistic repentance, succumbs to the spirit of the youths and laughs his head off.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME OF THE RESULTS

I

By this time a noteworthy thing has happened imperceptibly: Tolstoy's fame has spread from Russia to the entire world.

Until recently, no matter how great his celebrity may have been in Russia, Europe and America utterly ignored the very fact of his existence. Following an old tradition, the West, generally speaking, continued to regard Russia as an "inarticulate" country and a "desert"; few suspected that it could have any spiritual life of its own. The only Russian writer known and valued in the West was Turgenev (and this, too, largely thanks to his frequent stays in Europe and to his friendship with leading French men of letters); but he was regarded as an exception.

In 1879, there appeared in Paris (thanks to Turgenev, by the way) the French version of "War and Peace." This was one of the first translations of Tolstoy into a foreign tongue. Upon having read it, Flaubert wrote to Turgenev about Tolstoy enthusiastic lines: ". . . *Quel peintre et quel psychologue! Il me semble qu'il y a parfois des passages à la Shakespeare. Je poussais des cris d'admiration pendant la lecture—et elle est longue. Que c'est fort!*" Some others were impressed, too. But the public at large did not notice the book at all—hardly a few hundred copies were bought. During the same year, Matthew Arnold introduced Tolstoy, by an essay on him, to English-speaking readers. But all this did not amount to much. Tolstoy continued to remain unknown.

But in the six or seven years that followed, the situation changed with strange briskness. Tolstoy suddenly became the literary hero of the day all over the world. In any case, by 1886, most of his important works had been published in London and New York and numbers of articles on him began to appear in the periodicals. As for Paris and France at large, they already were fully in the throes of the "Tolstoy mania." As Maurice Barrès jested, if two

cultured Frenchmen met in the street, one of them absolutely had to begin the conversation by: "*Ah, Monsieur, avez vous lu les russes?*" while the other one had to answer enthusiastically, falling a step back: "*Oh! ce Tolstoï!*" Baffled by the fact that Tolstoy's epics, thousands of pages long, were selling out edition after edition, the Chauvinistic critics (of them there always have been enough in France) already began to voice "the danger" of "France's literary invasion by Russians." Tolstoy is extolled as an artist. But his foreign popularity is chiefly as a moralist. Of course, those who embrace his faith are insignificantly few. Moreover, his teachings are more than often misinterpreted. Innumerable absurdities were written on him in the eighties and nineties. Some see in him "the great Russian revolutionary and Nihilist" and go in raptures over his "subversive propaganda." Others are delighted by the not wholly intelligible but very fascinating scandal of "a hundred percent real Russian count" making shoes. Others still babble banalities on the light coming from the Orient. Yet, at bottom all *feel* him right. All feel the Quixotic tremendousness of his moral effort. To use Romain Rolland's words, he has become "the conscience of the world." It is exactly this that makes and will make his fame spread in such an unprecedented way from Bombay to Tokio and from Australia to Madrid.

At Khamovniki and Yassnaya, this fame makes itself felt: the admixture of foreigners among the visitors circulating through the Tolstoy home becomes larger and larger. George Kennan (who will write about Tolstoy in *The Century*) and some American ladies of the Christian Science, who have understood in Tolstoy's teachings only the denial of dogmas, and are rather disappointed by his reluctance to agree that "there can be Christianity in business"; the Japanese writer Toukotomi; the future President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Masaryk,—these are a few of the figures that appear in the Tolstoyan drawing-rooms and which soon will transform them into a real "Internationale." There are some comical cases. For instance, apparently totally ignoring the nature of Tolstoy's religious ideas, but impressed by his popularity, the French Government sends J. Déroulède to Yassnaya, with the idiotic mission of rallying Tolstoy to the anti-German cause! And Cesare Lombroso, who goes bathing with Tolstoy, nearly drowns in the Yassnopolyanian river Voronka; Leo Nicholayevich pulls

him to a safe place by the hair. How does Tolstoy react to his success abroad? He pays literally no attention to it, hardly ever gives it a thought. He rejoices only when, in some foreign publication, he comes across an article accurately summarizing his ideas; this is useful to "the cause."

Since the middle of the eighties, he is constantly being tormented by artists and sculptors: an excellent portrait of him is made by Gay; the famous Ryepin makes a long series of drawings, sketches and portraits of him and of the members of his family, and many others eternalize him on paper, in clay and bronze. At first he resisted this consequence of fame, both out of Christian principle and out of perfectly sincere modesty. But the attacks of artists are so persistent, and it is so painful to him to hurt them by refusal that he now has submitted himself to his fate. To enumerate the famous musicians who, during these years, play at Khamovniki in the evenings, would be impossible. Sometimes, a young man in a Russian shirt sings there; his name is Fyodor Chaliapin.

Meanwhile, the Tolstoyist movement has progressed considerably. At the end of the eighties and at the beginning of the nineties whole "Tolstoyist colonies" spring into existence in Russia; groups of men and women settled on the land and lived on their manual labor, working together and owning, at least in theory, everything, including frying-pans and clothes, in common. Early Christians . . . There is among them a large percentage of enthusiastic youths. Life sometimes confronts the "colonists" with ironically sad situations. For instance, having understood that the Tolstoyists do not resort to violence for the defense of their property and do not address themselves to the authorities for protection, peasants, in many places, begin to steal from them a plow, a horse; the colonists are puzzled—what to do? They try to act by persuasion, explain to the peasants that they are their brothers. But the peasants smile, and, remaining unpunished, are encouraged: they appropriate the colonists' cows, saddles, swine and poultry, scythes and pales until, exasperated, the "early Christians" remain stripped of everything. Of course, this cures many a youth of Tolstoyism. Generally speaking, these colonies will later on break up and disappear one after the other, like soap-bubbles. But just now they are in their golden age.

Chertkov's influence on Tolstoy continues to grow. The timid

ex-naval officer Biryukov, through his unreserved devotion, has also occupied a place in Tolstoy's heart. He, by the way, will begin soon to write "the teacher's" biography in four volumes,—a biography which will be a very valuable collection of documents and data accumulated with minute accuracy and honesty. Among the new Tolstoyists there are men of touching sincerity and enthusiasm. Such, for instance, is Prince Dimitry Khilkov, an ex-officer of His Majesty's Hussars, who has given away all of his large estates to the peasants and who now works on a poor peasant lot of a few acres. But how different are the majority of Tolstoyists! What a strange human element usually rallies to Tolstoy's ideas. Maxim Gorky who, some time later, will know this public rather well, will write:

"It is strange to see Leo Nicholayevich among the Tolstoyists. There stands a majestic belfry, and its bell unceasingly resounds all over the world: and, around, run little, cautious dogs that squeal to the tune of the bell, meanwhile looking stealthily and suspiciously at one another—which one will squeal better? It always has seemed to me that these people thickly permeate the Yassnopolyanian house . . . with an atmosphere of hypocrisy, cowardice, petty commercialism and impatient expectation of inheritance. There is something in the Tolstoyists which makes them resemble those Russian pilgrims who, roaming in far-off ends of Russia, carry with them pieces of a dog's bones and assure everybody that these are holy relics, and who sell to peasants 'the Holy Virgin's tears' in a bottle . . . Almost all of them like to sigh and to kiss each other; they have boneless and always sweating hands, and false eyes . . ."

Fundamentally, this is accurate. Failures and nonentities often adore to bathe in the beams of a great man's glory; and it is especially convenient to bathe in the beams of Tolstoy's glory, for there is such a profession as Tolstoyism.

And Tolstoy? How does he look at his followers?

Here he is standing in "The Intermediary"—a bookstore which has become one of the headquarters of Tolstoyists. Under their subservient looks and sighs, he seems to feel constrained, uneasy. The subject of conversation is "non-resistance to evil by violence." Questions like this are asked of him:

"Leo Nicholayevich, and what shall I do if a tiger attacks me?"

Hiding a grimace of shame and pain under a smile, he answers:

"Well, a tiger; where have you found it? I've lived all my life without having ever met with a tiger . . ."

How he thirsted, only a few years ago, for "brothers and sisters," and what a disappointment they often are to him! He is too sharp a reader of characters not to discern the lying hypocrisy of some of them. Yet he tries to explain it by their desire "to please" him; besides, they "serve the cause." Hence, he is very kind and tactful to them,—even when they ask such questions. But at times he cannot bear it:

"Tolstoyists? No one is more repugnant to me."

II

In the winter of 1890 the following occurrence took place at Yassnaya (for the Tolstoys were spending that winter at Yassnaya).

A few peasants made a habit of felling and stealing trees from the Posadki forest belonging to the Tolstoys. This went on for quite some time. Finally, Sophie Andreyevna decided to put an end to it and asked Leo Nicholayevich what was to be done. It is difficult to understand just what happened with him at that moment: did he forget his Christianity, or was he simply thinking of something else? In any case, to believe Sophie Andreyevna, he thought for a minute and answered: "We ought to scare them and then forgive." Accordingly, she filed a complaint at Tula. Peasants were arrested, tried and condemned to six weeks of prison. Having thus attained her purpose, Sophie Andreyevna demanded their liberation. But both she and Tolstoy overlooked a technical detail: this was a criminal case, and, after the court's decision was passed, the plaintiff could not annul it. Her intercession remained without avail: the peasants had to serve their terms.

One can easily imagine what Tolstoy felt when he learned of it: because of *his* property these men were to rot in prison! The "law" dubbed them "thieves," whereas he knew that it was he, who owned this property, who was a thief. "In the night [Sophie Andreyevna wrote] he could not sleep, jumped up from his bed, paced up and down the hall, suffocated; of course he blamed it all on me and reproached me very cruelly . . ."

Apparently, this occurrence made one of those disproportionately strong impressions on Tolstoy which so often prompted

him to take important decisions. In any case, immediately following, in the spring of 1891, he brings out with renewed acuteness the old, aching issue of property.

One remembers that, in 1884, Tolstoy compelled Sophie Andreyevna to become the administrator of all his fortune,—estates, houses and literary rights. He realized, however, that this solution of the question was not a solution at all; what of the fact that he, so to speak, turned away from his property, became a “hanger-on” in his family? Legally speaking he was still the owner of it. Now, when writing for money definitely became “prostitution” to him, it was especially painful to him to realize that his family was deriving revenues from his writings. Large revenues, at that; ably handled by Sophie Andreyevna, his collected works were selling out edition after edition (one or two editions a year).

Now he cuts the Gordian knot. In April of this year, after long family discussions, he divides his estates in ten equal parts among the nine children and Sophie Andreyevna and definitely transfers ownership to them by a legal act.

But with literary rights things do not go off as smoothly as that. What he wants is to renounce them entirely, so that his works should be a *res nullius* and any one could publish them freely, without paying any royalty to him. Sophie Andreyevna does not want even to hear of it. “I love our family and want to see it prosperous,” she will write later. Besides, as she will argue, not without reason, it is not the poor who would benefit by the money thus repudiated by Tolstoy: “It is the wealthy publishers like Marx, Tzetlin—Jews—and others, who will be enriched by it,” and this drives her to indignation. Tolstoy is willing to compromise; he agrees that his family (in Sophie Andreyevna’s person) should retain the right to all of his works written before 1881, that is to say, before his “regeneration” and that only his later works should be purged of the shame of money. But even this is unacceptable to Sophie Andreyevna. Constant discussions; the atmosphere again becomes tense. Finally, on a July day, both lose their tempers, a violent verbal collision takes place and, all in tears, Sophie Andreyevna runs to a railroad-line to throw herself under a train . . . On the road she is met by Kuzminsky, her brother-in-law, who, struck by her condition, stops her and succeeds in bringing her home.

But Tolstoy is tenacious. In September of the same year there appears in the newspapers his formal announcement by which he renounces all payment for the works he wrote (or will write) after 1881. This time, apparently, Sophie Andreyevna, exhausted by the struggle, does not resist.

In connection with the division of property, a few words may be said of Tolstoy's children.

By this time the oldest of them are grown-up (Count Serge is twenty-eight). The older boys are already married, have families of their own and live by themselves. They often gather in the parental home, but now that they are away, this home is no longer as densely peopled as in former years. Since the older ones (or most of them at least) have already passed the education period, it is no longer necessary for the family to spend winters in Moscow, and it will often, as before, live all year in Yassnaya.

The regenerated Tolstoy is a strange father. "Some people think that it is good to love one's children very much." He does not think so now. A Christian must love all, no doubt. Yet, "You say," he writes to a correspondent, "that it is impossible to love King Irod. I don't know. But I know, and you know, that one must love him . . . I imagine to myself a man who has spent all his life among men loving him and who loved them himself, but did not love King Irod, and another man who has been indifferent to those loving him and has been spending all his forces to arouse love for Irod in himself, and, after twenty years of unsuccessful attempts, has finally succeeded in it . . . Well, comparing these two men, I really do not know which of them is better." In other words, the sophistication of Tolstoy's Christian zeal has prompted him to work out quite a theory of loving far ones in preference to near ones, of loving abstract mankind rather than concrete men,—of loving "King Irod" just because it is difficult to love him and because to love him is, so to speak, a gymnastic, an athletic feat in Christianity. From this viewpoint one naturally must emit one's affection to one's children with moderation, so as not to give them more than one would give a beggar in the streets. To this is added, in Tolstoy,—at least in his attitude towards the boys,—his old grudge: not a single one of them shares the father's views. As a result of all this he not infrequently speaks to them in a coldly contemptuous tone. At moments things grow even worse. When one of the boys served

his term of the military service as a volunteer, the father twitched with suppressed indignation and spoke of "professional assassins." And later, when one of his children's children dies, Tolstoy will say in a conversation with a friend: "Well, if she had lived, she would have been a parasite of our class anyhow." Sometimes, the boys blow up and more or less long quarrels follow, ending in a reconciliation, usually accompanied by tears on both sides (whatever Tolstoy may preach, his natural paternal instinct is strong). This, however, does not often happen: on the whole, the boys, brought up in patriarchal traditions, are full of respect for him. The two oldest ones, Counts Serge and Ilya, who received so much of his care in their childhood, are very fond of him; the younger ones, Leo, Michael and Andrew, are more attached to the mother.

Far more friendly is Tolstoy's attitude to his three daughters. The two older girls, Countess Tatyana and, especially, Countess Marie, are, if not exactly Tolstoyists, at least full of sympathy and admiration for their father's teachings (the third daughter, Countess Alexandra, who is now a child, will be even more so). After Tolstoy's regeneration, Sophie Andreyevna, as she put it, "resigned her secretaryship,"—refused to copy her husband's writings (she makes an exception only for his fiction-works). Her place is now taken by the girls: they not only copy, but also help him in his enormous correspondence, form, so to speak, his office force, attend to the affairs of "The Intermediary," keep in contact with Chertkov and other Tolstoyists, etc. (Later, hired help will be needed also; stenographers, secretaries, etc., will appear at Yassnaya.)

In later years, Marie marries a Prince Obolensky and Tatyana—one M. Sukhotin, a country-squire. Far from being happy over the happiness of his girls, Tolstoy, the unnatural father, takes both these marriages with an extremely unfriendly grimace. Learning of Tatyana's decision to get married, he writes to her: "I certainly cannot answer your letter as you should like me to answer it. I understand that a debauched man saves himself by getting married. But it is difficult to understand why a pure girl should *aller dans cette galère*. If I were a girl I would not get married for anything in the world. As for falling in love, knowing that it is not a beautiful, poetic and lofty feeling but a very bad and, especially, a morbid one, I would not open the doors to it and

would protect myself from it as cautiously as we protect ourselves from far less dangerous diseases, such as diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhus. It now seems to you that without this love there is no life for you. Smokers and men addicted to drugs have the same feeling, and yet they find real life only when they conquer their addictions." Of course, in the lips of the author of "The Kreutzer Sonata" this is not astonishing. Perhaps there is an element of jealousy in it, too; how dare the girls prefer marriage to "life in truth" with him?

Both his sons-in-law, Prince Obolensky and Sukhotin, are worthy, respectable men; with both of them he will be on very friendly terms.

It may be interesting to note that, at the time when another possible marriage arrangement shapes itself for one of his daughters, Tolstoy cannot dissimulate the fact that he is seriously displeased with it, because marriage to this man would be a "low" marriage for her, a *mésalliance* . . . Incredible as it may seem, the aristocrat is still fully alive in Tolstoy and, at times, steps forward and brushes Christianity aside. He still seems to have an unconquerable, instinctive antipathy for men who speak French with a bad accent.

III

Now Tolstoy,—rather unexpectedly,—becomes immersed in public life.

During these years, Tolstoy wrote not only fiction, but also a series of philosophic articles, essays, etc. One of them, "On Life," on which he worked in the latter part of the eighties, assumed the proportions of a whole book. But in all these works he said comparatively little that was new; they were merely a deeper and deeper pushing of the same fundamental ideas into various individual problems and issues.

But now, in the years 1891-1893 and in 1894, he writes yet two new works, the book entitled "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" and the essay "Christianity and Patriotism." These are two important documents.

They are a full expression of Tolstoy's religion as applied to politics. Of course, here, too, the main idea is already familiar to us from "What Shall We Do, Then?" It is Christian anarchism. But in these two works he sets it forth with more pre-

cision and in a more detailed way than he did it then, nine years ago. Besides, the sting of his thought is now directed against a concrete issue—against military service and war in general (“The Kingdom of God Is Within You” was even conceived originally as just an article against military service; it was only in the process of work that it expanded, both in size and in the scope of its ideas).

It will be hardly a mistake to say that, in the early nineties of the last century, when the conversations on “European Alliances” and “defensive armaments” were already in progress, no writer felt the horror of the future Armageddon, which, one day, would crown them with such a profusion of bloody flowers, as keenly as Tolstoy. And certainly no writer wrote such vividly prophetic pages of perturbed, aroused pain and humanity as he. He feels that unless the whole trend of our public life is radically changed, terrific catastrophes will come. “The bells will begin ringing, men with long hair will dress up in gold-embroidered sacks and begin praying for murder. And the whole horrible business familiar for ages will begin all over again. The journalists will get to work, egging men on, under the guise of patriotism, to hatred and murder, and will be delighted at doubling their sales. The factory-owners, the merchants, the purveyors of army-stores, will gleefully go to work expecting double profits . . . The idle ladies and gentlemen will get to work putting their names down for the Red Cross, getting ready to bandage those whom their own husbands and brothers are going to send to the slaughter, and imagining that in this they are doing a very Christian deed. And drowning the despair in their hearts with singing, debauchery and vodka, torn away from peaceful labor, from their wives, mothers and children, hundreds of thousands of simple, good-natured men, with weapons of murder in their hands, will trudge off where they are sent. They will march; will be frozen, will be hungry, will be sick, some dying of disease; until, at last, they reach the place where they will be murdered by thousands, and will themselves, not knowing why, murder by thousands men whom they have never seen, who have done them no wrong, and can have done them no wrong . . .” Let us remember that these lines were written twenty years before 1914, and not since, when every newspaper-scribbler has learned how to chew the pacifistic rag.

What is to be done? How can war, this greatest of evils, and the innumerable lesser evils of violence, such as capital punishment, imprisonment, etc., daily committed by every state over its citizens, be averted? Tolstoy does not believe in palliatives. He did not live to our days. But, without forcing upon him any idea that was not in his mind, one can imagine with what contempt he would speak of the sweet babble of the League of Nations, of pacts "outlawing war," etc.! Hypocrisy, especially self-satisfied hypocrisy, never escaped his eye. And when the Conference of The Hague gathered—for attempts to "outlaw war" are not the monopoly of our time only—he did not spare expressions to denounce its lie. No, he looks deeper into the matter. What is to be done? He answers this question by repeating what he already said in "What Shall We Do, Then?"—the state must cease to exist.

One may object: Not every state bears in it the threat of war; there are autocratic states where war can be unloosed by the will of one man, or of a few men; but there are, too, democratic states where the decision rests with the will of the people. Tolstoy brushes aside this objection. For him—and it is essential to stress this point—better or worse states do not exist; all of them are equally bad. He often will be referred to as "the great enemy of the Russian autocracy." This will not be accurate. It is perfectly true that he will curse the Imperial Government with great violence when it does something particularly cruel: he even will admit that such things are not done in the West, and that, in this sense, Western Governments are less bad, "as the guillotine is less bad than the rope." But in principle he is, on the contrary, even more angered by Western democratic régimes than by autocracy: un-Christian violence and compulsion, which is brutally outspoken in the latter, is subtly and hypocritically hidden from the eye in the former, which makes it all the more demoralizing and harmful. (In other words, he has fully retained, although now on other ideological grounds, his former aristocratic contempt of "liberalism.") Still less hope does he attach to Socialism, should it triumph. In his discussions of it he is pitiless. He understands but too well that, in spite of the coincidence of their "no-property" programs, Socialism is diametrically opposed to, and irreconcilable with, Christianity. It addresses itself to man's lowest instincts, to his stomach, by promising to satisfy his material desires ("a prom-

ise which, by the way, it never will be able to fulfil with the means it offers"). It knows no love; it thrives only on hatred for the oppressors and on "a dark envy of the sweet and satisfied life of the rich." It is all permeated with "a morbid thirst for wealth, reminding one of the thirst of fleas hurrying to a pile of vomit." If Socialism triumphs, the world will become despicably repulsive; no tyranny is more abominable than will be the tyranny of the ignorant and depraved city workman. But Tolstoy hopes the world will be spared this misfortune: "The same thing will happen with Socialism that happens with ladies' fashions: from drawing-rooms, they are always soon relegated to servants' quarters." Perhaps it is Socialism's pretense to "science" that is especially distasteful to Tolstoy: he dislikes science, but the arrogance of the self-admiring pseudo-scientist he cannot stand at all.

No, there was, is and will be no *moral* state—the very combination of these words is a *contradictio in adjecto*. Who says state, says violence; and who says violence, says prisons, punishments, social injustices, wars. A Utopist, Tolstoy does not understand the purposelessness of his anti-state sermons: he earnestly believes that, in our times, "there is no practical necessity whatsoever which would justify the existence of the state. . . ."

But how can the state be destroyed? And when?

By a revolution? To Tolstoy, there is nothing more horrible and absurd than such an answer—than the replacing of one evil by a still worse one. Just the contrary. In "The Kingdom of God Is Within You," he makes full practical use of his favorite Christian idea of "non-resistance to evil by violence."

The state will fall *by itself*. It will fall at the very moment when, instead of pretending to be Christians, men will really understand Christianity and will really *become Christians*. "It would suffice for men to . . . cease to care about worldly and public affairs, . . . and immediately, without struggle and without efforts, that abnormal organization of life which tortures them and threatens them with still greater misfortunes in the future, would crumble, and God's Kingdom would set in,—or, at least, that first stage of God's Kingdom for which men, by their present state of conscience, are already prepared."

"Without struggle and without effort"—what does he mean, in practical terms? If you are a Christian, do not pay taxes to the state; do not go to courts; *do not serve in the army* when you are

called to do your term of military service. They will arrest you, drag you to the court, throw you into a prison-cell or send you to Siberia? Yes. But what of it? If you are a Christian, neither these, nor still worse misfortunes can frighten you. Thus, it is not through the organization, but through the dis-organization, not through the doing, but through the Christian un-doing that the great change will come.

Tolstoy ardently believes, in spite of all disappointments, in the "ripening of men's consciences" for these ideas: the day is not so very distant, he asserts, when these simple Christian truths that are so clear to him will become clear to all. He greedily watches, and will watch for the rest of his life, all news from the wide world which confirms, or seems to confirm, this hope of his. For instance, he attaches great hopes to the activity of American Quakers, with some of whom he has long been in correspondence. It is for this reason, too, that he rejoices over every anti-war utterance in Europe, mistaking it for the confirmation of his Christian vision.

But there is yet another characteristic element in "The Kingdom of God Is Within You."

Tolstoy applies the principle of non-resistance to evil not only to politics, but, generally speaking, to man's conduct, and he does it now more thoroughly than ever before. In the first years of "new life" he burned with the desire to change his own life and the lives of others, to reform, revolutionize. Now he sees that it was a mistake. To change things of the outside world always means "to do violence," to "hurt some one," and, therefore, this must be abandoned. The center of gravity must be transferred from the realm of *deeds in the outside world*, to that of *self-improvement*, to constant work in one's inner world. "No one is called to change the world in the name of the truth. . . . Yet, everybody, not caring about that which is happening in the world (of this, God will take care) . . . must fulfil, within himself, the truth of God; that is to say, do His will. And this will is that the amount of love should increase within each heart and in the whole world."

Is this Tolstoy's psychological reaction to his failure to carry out the program of one-hundred-percent Christianity? An expression in theoretical terms of the bitter disappointments of these years? We do not know. The fact remains that "The Kingdom

of God Is Within You" lends a new tinge to his whole philosophy. There was always an element of passivity in it; now, however, this element definitely overweighs its active side. His Christianity becomes almost Buddhism.

IV

No sooner did these ideas crystallize in Tolstoy's mind than fate put them to a practical test.

In the summer of 1891 it became evident that thousands of peasant lives were threatened in Russia's central provinces by a crop-failure which was bound to result in a famine. All the active elements of Russian society were perturbed, discussing plans of relief-work by which the calamity might be counteracted.

But Tolstoy's theories "cannot be wrong" because "they are arrived at through reason." First of all, "do not resist the evil by violence." Besides, to die is "a joy for a Christian," and Russian peasants *are* Christians. Finally, Tolstoy long ago came to despise help with money, "with these notes on the sweat and labor of the poor," and philanthropy in general as "a hypocritic pretense on the part of the privileged minority to save the majority which it itself has deprived of everything." To everybody's astonishment, he declared that he was decidedly against any attempts to help the famine-sufferers.

When I. I. Rayevsky, the Marshal of Nobility of the province of Tula and Tolstoy's old friend, visited Yassnaya and was telling Sophie Andreyevna with enthusiasm of the measures he was taking, of the eating-places for the poor he was organizing, etc., Tolstoy, irritated, contradicted his every word, mumbled that "all this was terrific nonsense; that, should the famine really come, the only thing to do would be to rely on God," etc., and tried to chill his friend in every other way. And when N. S. Lyeskov, an eminent writer, asked his assistance in the collecting of funds, he answered him by a blank refusal and explained in a long, highly didactic letter that "what really mattered was not to feed the hungry, but to love both the hungry and the satisfied alike."

But then, suddenly, there came a day when the great Tolstoyan heart conquered and brushed aside the absurdity of Tolstoy's sophistication. In the fall, when the calamity was already under way, he made two trips to the famine-stricken areas. He saw the

horror of burned-out fields, of emaciated children with thin, stick-like legs and unnaturally swollen stomachs. Without saying a word, he took from Sophie Andreyevna five hundred roubles and, with his two elder daughters, rode to the province of Ryazan to help Rayevsky, whose relief organizations were already functioning.

This was the beginning of quite an era. As soon as Tolstoy's article, "The Terrible Question," appeared in the papers, enormous donations began to pour to him and to other relief-workers from all Russia. And not only from Russia. The world believes Tolstoy; and Tolstoy's appeal stirred the world. Large sums began to be raised for Russia in England, in America, everywhere. Soon sufficient funds were raised to carry all of the sufferers alive through the two winters of the famine. Meanwhile, throughout these two winters, Tolstoy develops activity which he alone is capable of developing. In the eating-places run by him alone, 16,000 persons are fed every day. From morning till night he rides, on horseback or in a cart, from one village to the other, supervising, organizing, counting the eaters, controlling, etc., and, according to habit, doing the maximum of work himself. Not satisfied with this, he organized the supply of fuel for the population. He supplied the people with shoes and clothing. He set up feeding-stations for the cattle, too: he foresaw how sad the situation would be if peasants, saved from starvation, remained without horses and cows. He did it all with a remarkable common sense, economy and efficiency—his organizations were admittedly the best in the country. And he hardly ever came back to Yassnaya or Moscow for a week or two of rest. Rayevsky, who worked with him, overworked himself, fell ill and died. To Tolstoy this is a heavy blow. "He died in my arms," he writes to Countess Alexandra. "I cannot forgive myself that, in the beginning I did not understand him. Yet, later, what a youthful, joyful and enthusiastic feeling it was for us both to work together!" Indeed, the enthusiasm of work renders him exceptionally joyous. Once he arrives with some young assistants in a peasant-cabin. He immediately offers a competition to them; who will jump up on this table without parting his legs? He himself begins; the sixty-four-year-old Tolstoy, without taking a step or run, lightly flies up on the table right from the spot; but the old table crumbles under his weight, and he falls on the floor

with a racket; all are aghast; but, still lying, he laughs his head off.

Does all this mean that, at last, Tolstoy has fully repented of having pushed a little too far the idea of the "non-resistance to evil by violence"? Not at all. He daily saved men from starvation; yet, far from being proud of it, he sincerely regarded this work of his as "a weakness"; he often reproached himself for it; he did not cease to feel criminally unfaithful to his own doctrine. He called his distribution of money received from the donors—"the distribution of the vomit disgorged by the rich." And when the orthodox Tolstoyists accused him of "lack of character" and of the "illogicality of helping the poor with the money which, as he himself knows, was stolen by the rich from these very poor," he answered that, yes, he was "guilty." And yet, he continued to ride, to organize, to work.

During the second year of Tolstoy's work unexpected complications came on.

At the very beginning of the famine, Emperor Alexander III declared: "There is no famine in Russia; there are localities which have suffered from the failure of crops." This meant that the famine was a rather unpleasant thing for the Imperial Government: it proved that not all was well in Russia; it discredited Russia in the eyes of Europe. The Emperor's words were, of course, taken as an order by the authorities, and the censorship banned the very word "famine" from the papers—only "the failure of crops" was to be used. For this reason, the Government, in general, viewed with a somewhat uneasy eye the bustle which charitable organizations were making around the calamity; but it was with Tolstoy's work that it was particularly displeased, and for the following reasons. The high clergy had long been thundering against Tolstoy as "the leader of a new heresy"; K. P. Pobiedonostzev, the leading ideologist of Russian reactionism and the highly influential Procurator of the Holy Synod, long ago demanded Tolstoy's "punishment"; the "die-hards," in general, strongly resented his propaganda "directed against all established institutions." And now, by his participation in relief work, he stirred up all Europe and thus "scandalized" Russia, and won the enthusiastic admiration of all society! Yet it was impossible to check his work—it would be a still greater "scandal"; and so it was tolerated.

But Tolstoy formed a "bad habit." Under the guise of reports in which he acquitted himself of the expenditure of sums received from Russia and from abroad, he wrote brilliant articles containing the expression of his Christian-anarchical ideas. Some of these articles appeared in Russia heavily mutilated by the censorship; but in England they appeared *in extenso*, without any clippings. This in itself was bad enough; what was still worse, was that in one of them his English translator mistranslated a phrase, lending to it—absolutely incorrectly—the sense of an advice to the Russian peasants "to rise against the conditions" under which such a thing as famines was possible. *The Moscow News* (*Moskovskiya Vedomosti*), an organ of the die-hards, picked up this fact in an editorial worded in the tone of glaring patriotic indignation and stating that "such utterances could not be tolerated." A storm began in St. Petersburg's ministerial offices. What could be done with Tolstoy? Should he be arrested and tried? That was impossible—he was too big a figure. Finally, in one of the wise bureaucratic heads was born the project of confining him to a monastery. And it became known in the court-circles that a report to this effect was to be submitted to the Emperor.

Countess Alexandra was one of the first to hear of it. Well advanced in her seventies, the honorary lady-in-waiting and "chivalrous dame of the Order of St. Catherine," was now one of the most influential women at the Court. What made her position quite exceptional was that she had educated the Emperor's sister and had been a close friend of the Emperor, whom she had known since his childhood. He now showed her an exceptional sign of attention by often coming to see her informally,—exactly "coming," for a glass gallery connects her apartment with the Imperial rooms.

By a strange coincidence, it so happened that, during his last visit, he asked her:

"Tell me, whom do you believe to be the most popular persons in Russia? Knowing your sincerity, I am sure that you are going to speak frankly. Of course, do not even think of naming me among them."

"I would not name you, anyhow," the old lady answered, smiling.

"Whom are you going to name, then?"

"First of all, Leo Tolstoy."

"I expected you to say that," the Emperor laughed (he knew of Countess Alexandra's feelings for her "grandson"). "I think that you are perfectly right," he added.

A few days later, hearing of the measure planned against Tolstoy, Countess Alexandra, all anxiety, wrote immediately to the Emperor asking for an interview. He came.

For a long time, she did not know how to begin her intercession; but then she boldly went to the subject.

"Sire, one of these days a report will be submitted for your approval on the relegation to a monastery of the most popular man in Russia."

"Of Tolstoy?"

"You have guessed right."

"So he conspired against my life?"

Countess Alexandra drew a sigh of relief: the Emperor, from her words, expected the worst. Her defensive speech flowed. Her main argument was that, should anything be done to Tolstoy, it is certainly not His Majesty's *ministers* whom the public would blame for it.

When, a few days later, the "monastery-report" was submitted to the Emperor, he peremptorily interrupted the reporter:

"Please, do not touch Leo Tolstoy. I do not have the slightest desire of transforming him into a martyr and of winning thereby for myself the indignation of all Russia. If he is guilty of anything, so much the worse for him."

Meanwhile, foreign papers were full of rumors on "Tolstoy's imprisonment," on "persecutions befalling Tolstoy," etc. Sophie Andreyevna had to write a letter to the influential press-organs in France, England, etc., assuring them that her husband was safely at home.

v

Since then a few years have passed; it is the middle of the decade. "The Kingdom of God Is Within You," "Christianity and Patriotism," and a series of Tolstoy's minor pamphlets and articles containing passionate assaults on Church, State, private property, violence, etc., circulate widely—although, of course, illegally—all over Russia and, translated into all civilized languages, sell in every European book-store. At moments this seriously frightens Sophie Andreyevna.

"You will finally get what you are out for: they will drag you, in chains, to prison"—she threatens her husband.

But Tolstoy answers unperturbably:

"That is exactly what I want."

Indeed, he dreams of suffering for his faith. But, alas! Ever since Emperor Alexander III uttered the words we have quoted, the Government's policy towards Tolstoy has been established once and for all: it has become a sort of a silently accepted unwritten law that, no matter what he would do he *can not be touched*. Alexander III died; his son, the strange human enigma named Nicholas II, is now on the throne of "All the Russias." The new Emperor has fully adopted his father's policy in "the Tolstoy question." And thus, Tolstoy finds himself in an absolutely exceptional position.

Moreover, things take a rather unexpected turn. Yassnaya and Khamovniki are surrounded by spies and secret police agents; Tolstoy's every step and word are known to the authorities. The authorities know, too, through what channels Tolstoy's prohibited writings are spread. And they begin to persecute those who "keep [in quantities] and spread Tolstoy's works." Thus, one day, one Mme. Kholevinsky, a woman-physician and Tolstoyist, is arrested, tried and exiled.

Tolstoy's preachings of combating the state by Christian non-resistance have begun to find response. Not long ago Tolstoy learned that one Olkhovik, a simple peasant and follower of his teachings, blankly refused to serve his term in the Army. He was banished to Siberia—in the eyes of the Government such refusals are a serious crime. On his way there he converted the soldier Sereda under whose custody he was; the same punishment was inflicted on the soldier. Then the artist S., an acquaintance and follower of Tolstoy, refused, in the same manner, to put on the "uniform of the assassins"; he was put on trial in a mad-house; the horrors he saw there broke his courage, he repented and entered the ranks.

These were the first cases. But now quite a few other men, carried away by Tolstoy's personality and preachings—not of those who sit and babble at Yassnaya, but, mostly young enthusiasts whom Tolstoy hardly knows—have done, and will do, the same thing. And all of them pay a heavy price for their daring—imprisonment, banishment, Siberia, the "disciplinary battalions."

For many this Calvary will result in premature death. Of Tolstoy's close friends, Prince Khilkov, of whom we have already spoken, is exiled to the Caucasus for his propaganda of "New Christianity" among peasants. And there, with the benevolent assistance of the authorities, his mother, who cannot forgive him his "degradation" (conversion to Tolstoyism), organizes the kidnapping of his children and takes them to herself in order to bring them up "in the right spirit." To Prince Khilkov and his wife it is a terrific tragedy.

Of course, theoretically, Tolstoy ought to rejoice that the number of "real Christians" increases. Of course, for a "real Christian," to suffer persecutions is "a joy." But how ironical is fate! What can be stranger than the fact that his religion so ardently preaching love should breed so much unhappiness,—now not only in his own family, but also outside of it! Moreover, can he help realizing the paradoxical abnormality of the situation: *others* suffer, and suffer lavishly, for his ideas, while he calmly lives at Yassnaya. And, above all, does not his keenly human heart tell him that all these suffering men are *his* victims, that, in the last analysis, it is *he* who crumpled up and smashed their lives?

He understands it all and suffers. Finally, he writes a letter to the Ministers of Justice and of Home Affairs. In a calm and dignified tone he explains to them that he is the only real culprit; that it is he who writes and propagates, "and will write and propagate" ideas regarded by them as harmful; he entreats them not to persecute his followers, but to arrest, banish, or punish more severely, him and only him. And—a typical naïveté—he earnestly assures them that they mustn't be afraid of public opinion: "the majority of men will fully approve of such measures and will say that they long since ought to have been taken . . ."

Of course, these entreaties remain unanswered; "Tolstoy cannot be touched."

Meanwhile, when some of his followers, torn by indecision, ask him whether they ought or ought not to answer the call and serve their terms in the army, Tolstoy always answers: "Go and serve." Moreover, he assures the man that, if he serves, he, Tolstoy, will not cool off to him for this weakness, that he, to the contrary, will even "love him more." "And if you still decide to refuse, see that you should not do it in order to be admired and praised by men . . ." "Refuse only in case you feel that you can-

not do otherwise." In this, indeed, Tolstoy's tactfulness is irreproachable: he uses all his authority to save from the Calvary those "who are not fully ripe for it."

Let it be noted that the military service problem finds rather sad repercussion at Yassnaya. Count Andrew Lvovich, who, of all of Tolstoy's children, is the most irreconcilable to his father's teachings, does not hide his indignation over the "non-resistance" doctrine. "If I were not my father's son," he openly declares, "I would hang him." Hanging, he believes, would be the right punishment also for those of his father's followers who refuse to serve. Indeed, Turgenev only wrote of the eternal disagreement of "fathers" and "sons"; Tolstoy lives through this drama in reality.

Meanwhile, more serious events than these have ripened.

VI

These events took place in the settlements of "Dukhobors," in the Caucasus.

The Dukhobors, the members of an old peasant sect of Christian Communists, were long ago exiled to that country for their non-recognition of Greek-Catholic dogmas and refusal to serve in the Army. Here, their sectarian fervor somewhat weakened, and they got along very well both with the authorities and with the local population. But now, in 1895, a religious revival suddenly began among them: they decided to return to their faith in all its purity. Solemnly, they burned their arms on bonfires (in the medieval Caucasus every one lives under arms) and pledged themselves not to pay Government taxes and not to send their conscripts to the ranks. This was the time when, under the influence of the omnipotent K. P. Pobyedonostzev, the Government was trying to check the (rather frequent) desertions from the fold of the "established" Church, cost what it might. Fearing that the Dukhobor example might "contaminate" other elements of the population, the authorities subjected them to a very cruel treatment. During one of the attempted burnings of arms, the troupes dispersed the Dukhobor crowds by whipping and clubbing them (two or three of them being killed during the dispersal). Moreover, after that, four thousand Dukhobors were expelled from their settlements, their property was sold at auction for almost nothing and, scattered in groups of twos and threes, they were

banished to Georgian villages high in the mountains, while their leader, P. V. Veriguin, was exiled to the province of Archangel, in the extreme north. During the investigation carried on by the authorities, an interesting detail came up: some of the Dukhobors confessed that their whole present religious revival was due, at least in a measure, to the influence of booklets published by "The Intermediary," Tolstoy's publishing company.

Not a word on the Dukhobor affair transpires in the papers: the Government wants to hush it up. Tolstoy learns of it from a letter from Prince Khilkov. One can imagine his pain and indignation. He secretly sends Biryukov to the Caucasus to investigate the matter. And when the facts are thus verified, he sends a detailed description of the whole affair, entitled "The Persecution of Christians in Russia, in 1895," to the London *Times*. Its appearance is again an extremely embarrassing scandal for St. Petersburg. But the Government remains firm: the Dukhobors remain banished. And their situation becomes worse with every month: in wild Georgian mountains, they literally starve, and many of them die; besides, two hundred of them suffer in disciplinary battalions.

Tolstoy, however, does not leave the matter there. The theoretical "non-resister," becomes engaged in, so to speak, a hand-to-hand fight with the Government: cost what it may, he *must* save the Dukhobors, and, again, he displays an amazing energy and tenacity. He writes to Ministers, officials, governors, etc., denouncing the cruelty of the Dukhobors' "punishment," insisting that the Dukhobors should be permitted to leave Russia. Constantly, by words of love, he encourages the Dukhobors; he collects funds to give them immediate relief. He has to surmount unsurmountable difficulties: *The Russian News*, a Moscow daily which, on his request, opens a subscription for Dukhobors, is suspended; for the private appeal which he, Chertkov, Biryukov and Tregubov (also a Tolstoyist) signed and which, in thousands of copies, was sent to all notable Russians, these three friends of his are exiled for five years (Biryukov and Tregubov to a distant province, while Chertkov is requested to go abroad). Thus, he is absolutely deprived of the possibility of using the press. His every movement is paralyzed by the Government. This goes on for nearly three years.

Finally he triumphs. Stirred by his passionate revelations and

denunciations, Russian society is so aroused against the Government, and all the European press speaks of St. Petersburgian "administrative methods" in such terms that the Government, at last, gives in: Canada has offered the Dukhobors its hospitality, and the Government permits them to emigrate.

Some of the dogmatic paper-worms of Tolstoyism openly criticized him for his "betrayal of principles," for collecting money for the Dukhobors. And again, as during the famine of 1891, he accused himself, too. To one of his accusers he wrote: "All that you write is perfectly true. I always thought and felt, and think and feel now, that to ask for financial help for people suffering for the truth is bad and shameful . . . But what to do when they tell you: there are children, old men, weak, bellied, and nursing women who suffer from want, and you can help them by word and deed, if only you agree to do it . . . To agree means to find oneself in conflict with one's own convictions; . . . not to agree means to refuse that immediate help which can immediately relieve the actual sufferings. Through weakness of character, I always chose the second path, and that has always been torturing to me . . ."

And now fate wills him to repeat this "sin" once more, and in an even more sinful form. The fact is that there are more than seven thousand Dukhobors who want to emigrate; but to cross the ocean and reach Canada they need money, which they have not got.

To write for money is "prostitution," and, as we know, Tolstoy renounced in advance all possible royalties for his future works. Apparently, he hesitates long and painfully. Finally, however, he writes to Chertkov: "I have some unfinished novels . . . on which, lately, I have been working. Well, I should like to sell them for the highest possible price to English and American papers so that the money derived from them should pay the transportation of the Dukhobors . . ."

Some time later, this idea, in a slightly modified form, becomes a decision. Of his unfinished works, he selects one, entitled "The Resurrection." At the end of 1898, he sells the serial rights for it to the *The Field* (*Niva*), one of the most popular weeklies in Russia for 12,000 roubles, and to various periodicals in Paris, Berlin, London, etc., also for large sums. Thus, "The Resurrection" will appear in the course of 1899 in literally all important capitals

of the world, in all civilized languages. It is stipulated that the publishers will pay Tolstoy (or the Dukhobor Relief Committee in London) in advance, on the delivery of the first chapters of the novel. It is true that the money thus raised does not cover all the cost of transportation. The fact is that publishers were willing to pay Tolstoy much more than they finally agreed, should he give them, at least for a month, an *exclusive* right for the novel in each of their respective countries; thus, Marx, the owner of *The Field*, offered 35,000 roubles instead of 12,000; but to push the compromise with his conscience to such criminal limits Tolstoy refused: his works, even if paid for, must be "free"—as soon as they appear in one periodical in a given country, they may be reprinted by whoever might desire to reprint them. . . . But the rest of the money is soon found: the world, which has followed Tolstoy's struggle for the Dukhobors with great attention, and which is especially impressed by this last effort of his to bridge the ocean for them by a novel, showers donations. At the beginning of 1899, the Dukhobors sail to Canada.

VII

The history of the subject of "The Resurrection" is typical.

In 1891 or 1892, Anatol Fyodorovich Koni, an outstanding Russian jurist and a friend of the Tolstoy family, told Leo Nicholayevich of a rather unusual case of which he had learned.

A prostitute was tried for burglary in a Petersburg Court of Justice. Looking at her, a young society man who happened to be on the jury to his horror identified in her a girl whom, a few years ago, he had seduced.

This girl was brought up out of charity (she was an orphan) by the young man's aunt. Once, visiting his aunt's estate, he met her there; she was very attractive; he began to court her, and she gave herself to him. Learning of it, the "benefactress" became indignant, not with her nephew's, but with the girl's immorality and chased her away from the house. At first the young man helped her, but then forgot her and lost her from sight. And thus, during these years, while he was rising higher and higher in his bureaucratic career, she, left without means of existence, was falling lower and lower and, finally, landed in a brothel.

Now, looking at her from the jurymen's bench, the young man felt that she was his victim. Torn by remorse, he immediately

decided to marry her to atone for his crime. It was difficult—she was under arrest. But he visited her daily in the prison, implored the authorities, sought the assistance of his influential friends. Suddenly, however, fate, like a bad novelist, solved this drama by precipitating an artificial ending: the prisoner contracted typhus and died in the prison hospital.

Listening to this narrative, Tolstoy was deeply, unusually impressed. At first he implored Koni to write it all, as a story, for "The Intermediary"; but then he changed his mind and asked his friend to give this subject to him, and Koni agreed.

Why was Tolstoy so moved by this little human tragedy? Because such seductions of chambermaids by young gentlemen are rather usual stories of Russian, and not only Russian, life? No, not for these reasons only.

On the very eve of his death, Tolstoy will once, with tears in his eyes and with greatest emotion say to his biographer, Biryukov:

"You are writing about me, and writing only good things. This is not right—my evil deeds must be described, too. In my youth, I lived a very bad life, and there are two events which still torture me especially. The first is the liaison I had with a peasant woman [the heroine of "The Devil"] . . . The second is the crime I committed over Gasha, the chambermaid in my aunt's house [at Kazan]. She was innocent; I seduced her; she was told to leave the house; and she perished."

Deeply impressed by Tolstoy's emotion, Biryukov certainly will not question him about the details.

Thus, without knowing it, Koni was telling Tolstoy a story which was identically similar to a far-off page of Tolstoy's own biography; with that only difference that, unlike the young man of Koni's narrative, he, Tolstoy, the young university student, did not even think of atoning for his sin by marrying his victim.

At the moment when, staking the fate of the Dukhobors on it, Tolstoy sells "The Resurrection" to periodicals, he has only the first, unfinished sketch of the novel. The novel is conceived on a very large canvas (some six, or seven hundred pages, that is to say, half the size of "Anna Karenina"). Thus, there is an enormous amount of work to be done on it, and it is to be done at very definite dates: as first instalments begin to appear, the next ones must be finished; should a delay occur, the whole com-

plicated scheme of simultaneous (or almost simultaneous) publication by the numerous foreign periodicals will be upset. Throughout the year, his daughters stand around Tolstoy literally wrestling from his hands every chapter he has finished, and as soon as it appears in *The Field*, it is wired to all the ends of the world for speedy translation. He hates to work under such pressure, but he has to. And the further he goes, the more his creative enthusiasm of olden days awakens. "I do not know whether it is good or bad," he writes to Chertkov, "but I am all in 'The Resurrection.' I hope to express many important things in it, and it is for this reason that I am so carried away by it. At times, it seems to me that it will contain much that is good and necessary to men; but, at others, I am afraid that it is merely my [literary] passion . . ." And, in the midst of this work, he has to carry on artistic researches, too. He never permits himself to be inaccurate in description. And thus, tearing himself away from his desk, he has to rush to an inspector of the Butyrsky prison in Moscow, or to the director of the prison of Tula, and question them about the minutest details of prison life and routine for those chapters of his novel which are set in the prison. And, meanwhile, innumerable misunderstandings occur with publishers and translators, and he has to settle them; some of the foreign periodicals with which he has nothing to do find a way of bringing out the instalments of the novel *before* the periodicals with which he has contracts, and he is obliged to admonish them to refrain from this practise, etc., etc. Finally, the censorship constantly exasperates him by clipping long "dangerous" passages from the novel. At times he is in despair, at the end of his forces, and dreams of "giving it all up." Yet, "as a bomb-shell which, nearing the earth, moves quicker and quicker," he, nearing the end, works more and more efficiently. And, finally, the year's speed-race is finished, the last instalment is sent off.

The triumph of "The Resurrection" reminds one of the time of "War and Peace" and of "Anna"; the difference is that then it was Russia alone that went into raptures; now it is the entire world. Appearing in book form, it sells in a larger number of copies than probably any novel has ever sold; its circulation reaches millions of copies. There are *forty* consecutive editions of it (and large editions, at that) in Russia, twelve in Germany, about as many in France, several editions in England and

America, not to speak of Rome, Tokio, Stockholm, Bombay, etc. Of course, its triumph is due not only to the authorship of the admittedly greatest living artist, but also to the colossal propaganda which the political circumstances under which it was written have made for it. However it may be, it becomes—and will remain—the most celebrated single work by Tolstoy.

Of course, Tolstoy does not get a cent of money on its book-form publication: the money for the Dukhobors was derived from serial rights only. Here, from his own, Christian, viewpoint, one might reproach Tolstoy: by refusing to accept the million, or millions, of roubles, of royalties to which he is entitled, does he not deprive thousands of sufferers of that help which he could give them with it? But no. Such self-accusations do not occur to him: he is happy that, at last, he has lived up to his theory of "harming" neither himself and his family, nor any one else with "the curse of money."

Koni's story forms the central dramatic plot of "The Resurrection." But the novel is much wider than that in scope. Developing this plot, Tolstoy brings in the court-room, the sufferings in putrid prison-cells, the house of prostitution, country-estates, the Senate, Siberia, etc. The result is a panorama of Russia, of humanity in general, almost as wide as that of "Anna Karenina"; but, in contrast to the aristocratic atmosphere of "Anna," it is the underworld, the reverse side of the medal that is shown here. In its technique, too, "The Resurrection" stands nearer to Tolstoy's great epics of the preceding period than to his later works: it is written in the old method of exuberant, detailed painting, not in the brisk new "to the point" style. Why did Tolstoy choose this method which he had condemned? We do not know. Perhaps it was better suited to the width of the canvas. But in its artistic qualities "The Resurrection"—alas—stands way below both his old epics and the best of Tolstoy's new work.

Does Tolstoy's artistic power show the first symptoms of senile weakening? By no means. The first quarter (or more) of the novel is perfect. The description of the court-trial, satirical, but sustained, psychologically exquisite, deeply stirring; the retrospective story of Katyusha's love for Nekhlyudov, all in those instinctively poetic overtones of youth which remind one of Na-

tasha Rostov in "War and Peace"—these and many other chapters are Tolstoy at his very best. Reading them one feels but too well that seventy years have found themselves powerless against the muscles, nerves and blood of these eternally living words. But then the novel begins to deteriorate; and, with occasional exceptions, it keeps deteriorating to the end.

The cause of this is two-fold. First of all, as we know, Tolstoy was working under great pressure; and he foresaw what that might mean. "If I go on correcting the novel until I am satisfied with it," he wrote to Chertkov, "I will never finish it . . . I will have to deliver it such as it is." On the first part of the novel he had worked long before, as we know, and it came out perfect; but, writing the rest of it, he, the exacting craftsman, was deprived of the possibility of bringing it to perfection through his usual process of endless re-writings, improvements; he practically had to send it off in its first draft. Meanwhile—and it is here that the second cause comes in—the central and the second part of the novel presented an artistic problem especially difficult of solution.

Having discovered, at the trial, the horrible consequences of his deed, Nekhlyudov not only decides to marry the prostitute Katyusha; a complete Christian transfiguration, "resurrection," gradually takes place in him. His eyes "open," that is to say, he begins to look at everything through the eyes of the Tolstoyist truth. Profiting by this, Tolstoy wanted to work into the novel all of his philosophy, with its religious, social and sexual ramifications, and show the whole world in the changed light of Nekhlyudov's eyes. And it is here that, lacking time, he failed. He failed to work this moral idea into the fabric of the novel, to transform it into the inner psychological growth. It remained, as it were, thrust on Nekhlyudov from outside. And Nekhlyudov, hitherto unmistakably alive, suddenly faded out, withered away, became just a dead pretext for the author to philosophize and preach. Many other figures also turned into pasteboard. Moreover, the architectural lines of the second part of the novel are spoiled by tiresome philosophic digressions. Finally, what is still worse, is that, as though hurrying to force into the novel all he has to say, Tolstoy satirizes all accepted institutions and forms of life with such obvious tendency and unartistic vehemence that the reader constantly feels that a certain viewpoint is being forced

upon him, and this annoys him. In this respect Tolstoy, indeed, at times loses all sense of measure. For instance, the satirical description of a Church-service in a prison is so heavily blasphemous that it is a grave lapse from good taste—not from the viewpoint of Church-believers only. A typical thing: while writing, Tolstoy felt all this; at times he bitterly complained that he was “sacrificing the esthetic side of the novel to the moral idea.”

Unlike the heroine of Koni's story, Katyusha does not die. Nekhlyudov's efforts to prove her innocence (for she did not commit the murder of which she was accused) fail; she is exiled to Siberia, and Nekhlyudov follows her. It is here that the novel ends, and ends rather disappointingly, nowhere: seeing self-sacrifice in Nekhlyudov's decision to marry her, she obstinately refuses; but will she accept in the end? The novel leaves this question unanswered. And is Nekhlyudov's regeneration lasting and serious? This is not clear, either.

The explanation is that, in Tolstoy's conception, “The Resurrection” was to be only the first part of a larger work; it was there, in the continuation, that the fate of its heroes was to be brought to a solution. But even this majestic conception, as well, remained unfulfilled: he never even tried to continue. Why? Perhaps because, to the end of his days, he disliked the imperfection of the first part too much.

VIII

At sixty-seven or eight, Tolstoy's energy and thirst to act remain as prodigious as before. As usual, behind the constant preoccupation with the Dukhobors and “The Resurrection,” he found time for innumerable other preoccupations and works, literary, philanthropically political, etc.

In 1895, a great misfortune befell the family. The seven-year-old Vanichka, the youngest (and last) son of the Tolstoy, died of scarlet fever. All who knew the boy agree that he was an absolutely unusual child, with super-human gifts of heart and mind. A friend of Tolstoy thus characterized him: “When I saw your boy, I thought that he would either die, or be a genius greater than his father.” He was a pet not only of the whole family, but of Tolstoy himself, too: forgetting all of his theories, the ageing father showered upon him an almost morbid tenderness and love.

Tolstoy wrote in his diary:

"March 11.—We buried Vanichka. Terrible! No, not terrible, but a great spiritual event. I thank Thee, Heavenly Father."

Indeed, those who saw the tears and the pain which streamed from his eyes when, stooping, he and his older sons carried the little coffin to the cemetery at Nicholskoye, understood how he suffered; but he did make heroic efforts to find consolation in his religion. "Why do children die?" he wrote to Countess Alexandra; why did this particular child die who, "sent to a world not yet ready to receive him, froze like a harbinger, like a swallow coming too soon"? "I have come to the conclusion that the only purpose of man's life is the increase of love within himself and, by contagion, within others." And Vanichka did his duty: passing away "to join Him who is love itself, he left among us the whole love which he grew within himself, binding us by it . . ."

But words do not always help. There were times when nothing could alleviate the pain. Once, hardly able to suppress his sobs, he said: "And I dreamed that Vanichka, alone of my sons, would continue my task on earth after my death." Such phrases would escape him for a long time to come.

The sad event did not remain without consequences. Sophie Andreyevna's affliction was even greater than Tolstoy's—it was overwhelming. Tolstoy saw it. Driving with her after Vanichka's coffin to Nicholskoye, he "caressed" her "with words of love," remembered the whole history of their romance, told her how, thirty-two years ago, not daring to disclose to her his infatuation, he often walked alone along this road . . . The more he looked at her grief, the more he admired "the beauty of her suffering." Indeed, he saw that "something very great was working in her soul"; extremely humble, meek, kind, she seemed to have risen to an unexpected height; she prayed; in some way of her own, she sought God. And thus, over the grave of their child, they buried all of their misunderstandings, and a deep rapprochement tied them once more together. Late in the fall, she left for Moscow; and he wrote to her: "I wanted to write to you, dear friend, on the very day of your departure, under the fresh impression of the feeling which I experienced, but it is only now, a day and a half later, that I am writing. The feeling which I experienced was a strange emotion, pity, an entirely new love for you, such love which made me completely transplant myself

into you and feel exactly what you felt. It is such a good, sacred feeling that I ought not to speak about it, but I know that you will be glad to hear of it, and that, expressed, it will not change in me. Just the contrary—having begun to write, I feel it again. Strange is this feeling binding us together—like the evening twilight. It is only seldom that the clouds of our failure to understand each other obscure this light. But I always hope that these clouds will disperse before nightfall, and that the sunset will be quite clear and limpid . . .”

Not only “clear and limpid.” Spring came, and a strange flower sprouted out of the memory of their recent grief: they were living through a new wave of passion. Again she had to leave; as though ashamed of this senile spring of passion, he began his letter to her with the words: “Read this when you are alone”; he filled it with tenderesses; at the end he added: “And it is a man of sixty-nine who writes it to a woman of fifty-three! . . .” Soon she writes in her diary: “Leo Nicholayevich is joyous, happy and as mad with passion, as last night . . .” Before “nightfall,” the setting sun blazed once more, and this after “The Kreutzer Sonata”—“The Devil.”

But it is not only in this that the “patriarchal” period seemed to have returned: together with passion, a violent eruption of jealousy shook the gray-bearded ascetic. The person who aroused in him this feeling was S. I. Taneyev, a noted composer and excellent musician who often came to Yassnaya on long visits. Sophie Andreyevna not only heard his noble, subtle music with exalted enthusiasm and enjoyed long, intimate conversations with him, but she also developed for him a something more than friendship; but this purely Platonic feeling could not cast any shadow on her as a wife; besides, Taneyev even did not know that she honored him with it. Yet Tolstoy suspected her, made scenes, blushed at Taneyev’s very name and was extremely irritated by her refusal to close Yassnaya’s doors to the composer.

But such periods as this were not frequent. As before, his Christianity remained Tolstoy’s main preoccupation.

He continued to feel painfully his unescapable curse, the disharmony between his life and his faith. His diary for the second half of the nineties’ abounds with entries like this:

“The chief danger in my situation is that, having, at first,

acquiesced to life in abnormal conditions of luxury in order not to violate love, I have, subsequently, become entangled in its temptations; so that now I do not know whether I live so because I do not want to violate love, or because I merely have succumbed to these temptations."

At times this feeling of "mortal weakness," of hopeless absorption in the "filth of life" reached such a point in him that he saw the possibility of salvation only in some drastic turn. Thus, in the summer of 1897 (while the jealousy tragi-comedy was still going on) he definitely decided, and decided in cold blood, to do what he had attempted to do twelve years ago, in a moment of excitement: he decided to "go away," leave his family. He wrote a letter to Sophie Andreyevna in which he announced his decision to her and which she was to find after he would be gone. "I cannot force you," he explained to her, "to change the trend of life in which I myself brought you all up . . . But to go on living as I lived these sixteen years, now struggling and irritating you, now myself yielding to temptation, . . . I cannot, either." In touching words, he thanked her for the thirty-five years of love she had given him and the family. He implored her "to let me go, not to try to find me." On his seventieth year, he wanted, "like an old Hindu," to withdraw to loneliness, "to the forest" . . . "to devote the last years of my life to God . . ."

He wrote this letter and remained at home. Did he pity his wife at the last moment? Or did he feel that he could not give up the Dukhobor affair? Or else, was it simply that the weakness of old age and of cursed, and yet dear, habits, triumphed? We do not know. This letter would reach Sophie Andreyevna only fifteen years later, after his death.

He considered such "going away" on other occasions, too.

It was especially painful for him to realize that, in spite of everything, his old soul still remained enamored of the veil of Maya, of the lure of earthly things. He could not help remembering with a thrill of carnal excitement and pleasure that "forty-five years ago I took part in a battle." He was young then . . . He also noted: "Was riding to-day near the barns; remembered the nights which I spent there, and Dunyasha's [a peasant girl's] youth and beauty,—I never had a liaison with her, —and her powerful feminine body; where is it now? . . ." The stern monk of spirituality did not cease to struggle against these

ever-green memories of the undying sensualist and artist; and he continued to labor to force himself into asceticism. Thus, the mighty septuagenarian learned to cycle, and he took a great fancy to it: "Cycled to-day to Yassenki; adore this movement; but it is shameful." Shameful—because it is a new weakness, a new earthly attachment. And thus, he forced himself to give it up. And then he wrote: "Am sick and tired of my body . . ."

Yet, perhaps the heaviest of his worries were not these. Almost twenty years of "new life" now lay behind him. He could not help asking himself the question: what positive results did they yield? And it seems that at moments a terrible doubt crept into his mind: were they not, from beginning to end, a mistake? At times, with a sad smile of fatigue he confesses that, trying to carry out Christianity, he "broke his nails"—and failed. What had been the use of trying, then? Once, in 1897, he quarreled seriously with Countess Alexandra. They started on one of their usual religious discussions; suddenly, he overflowed with bitterest anger: he told her that she dared not contradict him, that he knew those questions better than she, that he knew them, alas, but too well, that he had "*sacrificed his happiness*" to them . . .

Throughout the nineties Tolstoy worked on a play which would be published only after his death and which is entitled "The Light Shines in the Darkness."

Its subject is the awakening of Saryntzev, a country-squire and the central hero, to the religious truth and his attempts to introduce this truth into the practise of life. From this theme, to the smallest details in its elaboration, the play is pure autobiography.

What deeply impresses in it (apart from esthetic qualities which are very high), is that absolute impartiality with which Tolstoy has treated Saryntzev, that is to say himself, in it. Indeed, this is not the "Resurrection"-like characterization of "new life" in pink colors only. Unable to re-mold his life, Saryntzev suffers, and the tragedy of his sufferings is brought out very well. But at the same time, Tolstoy brings out the naïveté and comicality of Saryntzev's shaking hands with servants, of his taking lessons from a carpenter, of his sweeping of the floors, of his long sermons to the dancing young folks on the sinfulness of dancing, etc., with such honesty that, looking at Saryntzev, the reader cannot abstain from thinking: What a fool! And what a bore, too!

Still more impressive, however, is the balance which Tolstoy draws to Saryntzev's life. His wife, the unfortunate Marie Ivanovna becomes a real martyr. And the reader certainly sympathizes with her when, after endless domestic scenes, and after her husband's repeated attempts "to go away," she says to him: "How cruel you are! And you call that Christianity? This is merely atrocity. I cannot deprive my children of the fortune and give it away; and for this you want to abandon me? . . . I bore you seven children . . . I do not sleep nights, I nurse, manage the whole house, . . . and what do I get? . . . You love the whole world including the drunken Alexander Petrovinch, . . . but you hate the family and me . . . How Christian it is!" But Marie Ivanovna's misfortune is not all. Prince Boris, the fiancé of Saryntzev's daughter, is converted to his future father-in-law's teachings; he refuses to serve in the Army, is arrested and, after endless sufferings, perishes in prison. The priest, a friend of the family, also converted, loses his parish, is persecuted. The only thing the kind, honest Saryntzev can do is to look with horror at the havoc wrought around him by his preachings of love.

Tolstoy long worked on this play and often came back to it. But it remained unfinished. There survives but a short conspect of what was to be said in the fifth act: seeing in Saryntzev the assassin of her son, the Princess kills him; dying, Saryntzev says that he shot himself by accident; "enter Dukhobors; he dies, rejoicing that the deceit of the Church is revealed, and that his life has acquired sense for him." "The deceit of the Church is revealed,"—what a slim and nebulous consolation! Can it outweigh the reality of *genuine* tragedies spread by him? Is it not because Tolstoy felt the unconvincingness of such an ending that he did not write it? Indeed, to draw a negative balance to Saryntzev's life would be too sad for him; and he was too honest to draw a positive balance.

The publication of "The Resurrection" has an interesting result as by-product. The Holy Synod solemnly announces the excommunication of Count Leo Tolstoy from the fold of the Greek-Catholic Church. The cause of this decision is Tolstoy's anti-Church propaganda in general; and in particular—the blasphemous description of the Liturgy in "The Resurrection."

The only result of this measure was added publicity for Tol-

stoy. The announcement of it in the papers gave a new occasion to Tolstoy's admirers in Russia and in the world to demonstrate by an avalanche of letters, telegrams, congratulations, etc., their sympathy with Tolstoy and their disapproval of the Government.

Now, after "The Resurrection," he has definitely become a national Russian treasure, a living relic. He hardly can go out in the streets of Moscow: as soon as he appears, the classical white beard and peasant fur-coat are identified, crowds gather around him and cheer him in frenzied ovations.

He literally dreads such scenes; no matter how often they are repeated, he will never get accustomed to them; embarrassed, uneasy, he shrinks, does not know what to say, tries to sneak away and get home in a cab.

Tears fill his eyes. "Yes, I have won a great reputation. It proves that I have not achieved anything worth while in all my life."

CHAPTER XV

BACK TO THE "GREEN STICK"

I

He is quite old—seventy-three, seventy-four, seventy-five. There stand around him not only ageing children, but also a whole generation of grandchildren: soon their number will reach twenty-five. Now, all of his tremendous life lies behind. It remains for him now only to "write the epilogue"—as he himself puts it, "to well accomplish the final plunge," to die "well and joyously," is now the greatest problem with which life confronts him.

As of old, his mind continues to scrutinize the heavens. Certain changes have taken place in his religion. He was not quite satisfied even with his broad and undogmatic interpretation of Christianity; what he had sought was something still broader and more rationalistic. Starting from the premise that the divine spark of Reason must be the same in all men and that, consequently, the ultimate truth must lie not only in Christianity, but in other religions as well—that is to say, in the converging points of all religions—he immersed himself in the Prophets, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Confucianism, seeking to discover in them these levels of mystical unity. He arrived at a sort of a very broad, but unsubstantial pan-religion, which can be reduced to this simple formula: live ascetically and do no evil; then, after death, you will be fused with God, the "Universal Spirit."

But he has other thoughts, as well . . .

In the fulness of his age, there are times when he can deceive himself no longer: his faith in this "Universal Spirit" has always been and remains very shaky. He wants with all his being to believe, but still . . . Entries such as this occur in his diary:

"Once I asked myself: Do I really believe? Do I believe that the sense of life lies in the fulfilment of God's will, that this will consists in the increase of love (accord) in ourselves and

in the world, and that, by contributing to this increase, by this fusing together of all things loving, I prepare for myself a future life? And, instinctively, I answered that I do not believe—at least in this clear, definite form. In what do I believe, then?—I asked myself. And I sincerely answered that I believe that one must be good: that one must humiliate oneself, forgive, love. In this I believe with all my being . . .”

And once he even thought of “dispensing entirely with the idea of God”; but he felt so “unfortunate and lonely” in the thought that he decided God was necessary . . .

Until the last day of his life, he will repeat the name of God. But faith troubled by such doubts is, of course, not faith. Tolstoy is desperately enmeshed in that vicious circle in which any rationalistic religious thinker is bound to be caught: he cannot believe in a supernatural God, a divine Being, because such a God contradicts his reason; but he can no more believe in a “logically arrived at,” synthetic God, a “Universal Spirit,” because he feels that such a God is no more than a creation of his reason.

How little, then, remains of his ardent search of twenty-five years! Indeed, he now confesses that he was mistaken when, in his enthusiasm, he fancied that the whole truth was in his hands; he sees that his search is “only begun” . . .

He often speaks of the joy with which he anticipates death; that is to say, that moment when, “freed of the lustful body, the soul will be fused with God.” He develops these ideas in a series of essays and works of fiction. Thus, the hero of “Master and Man” (an unforgettable novelette, which he wrote in 1895), a sturdy, crass peasant freezing to death on a journey in the steppes, in his last hour passes through a touching and sublimating transfiguration; all his accustomed, selfish interests vanish and appear to him as unimportant, and he sacrifices himself to preserve from freezing his “man” (workman) whom, only an hour before, he had cheated and ill-treated; and, feeling himself to be the “man” of the Heavenly “Master,” he dies with the joyous thought that, having well performed his earthly “job,” he presently will appear before Him with clear conscience.

But this peasant actually believed in the “Master,” while Tolstoy . . . Indeed, it is not difficult to understand that all these writings and conversations are a mere self-consolation, an attempt at self-deception. “Last night [in bed] I blew out the candle,

began to search for matches in the dark and, failing to find them, was seized with anguish. Then I asked myself: 'And it is you who are preparing yourself to die? Are you going to die also with matches?'" From this "senseless" life which, in spite of his perpetual struggle with his instincts, he still greedily adores, he looks with reluctance into the darkness confronting him; he fears death, and he vainly strives to dispel that fear by lighting one consoling, rationalistic "match" after the other. He is, he assures himself with rather too much emphasis, "so happy" to be old; he would never exchange for youth his old age and the proximity it gives him to God. But at times his gnarled forehead contracts itself, and sad confessions escape him.

"Caliph Abd-ar-rahman had fourteen happy days in his life; I probably did not have even as many . . ."

Do "earthly attachments" still hold him? He must "dismantle himself" from them. He strives zealously to do so. He deliberately tries to suppress his love for tasty food (his "gluttony" still prompts him to overeat himself), for good music, for his family (a Christian must be good to all, but must have no personal affections), for the fragrance of blossoming lime-trees. But if he failed in the twenty-five years preceding, how can he succeed now!

But all this remains beneath the surface; he seldom shows it. Strangers see another side of Tolstoy. They see a side of him the fascination of which is undescrivable.

The sunset of his days is colored by an irresistible, mellow kindness and warmth. Old age and multiplied disappointments have given him a tolerance which formerly he lacked. He understands so well every human weakness, every failing—he himself has so many of them! He no longer condemns; he pities. With this is combined a spontaneous, full-blooded merriment which no ascetic self-crucifixion can kill. A caravan of traveling gypsies stops at Yassnaya; in the evening, they play and sing; he watches them; the fire of reckless joy kindles in his eyes and, unable to restrain himself, he starts dancing. . . .

His sense of humor remains inexhaustible. His peasant costume, for instance, during these twenty-five years, has given occasion to numberless amusing *qui-pro-quo*s; and here is a new one. He stands at the platform of the station of Yassenki, watch-

ing the crowd with his usual curiosity. A passenger train has stopped at the station, and a lady, on the steps of a wagon, looks around with great anxiety. Perceiving "the peasant" standing near, she tells him: "Please, old man, go to the station restaurant and tell my husband [she describes him] to hurry; he went to have a bite, but the train must presently leave. Go! I will give you ten kopecks." Tolstoy goes, carries out his mission, and the lady gives him the promised reward; but then, looking at him attentively, she recognizes the features familiar to all Russia and, horrified, exclaims: "Count Tolstoy! Leo Nicholayevich! Forgive me!" He bursts out with merry laughter: "No, madam! I won't give back the money! I have earned it!"

Yet, coming in contact with this old man, so kind, so cordial, so unaffectedly simple, all experience a trepidation akin to fear. Is this the luster of his fame? Yes, that; but not that alone. Once, in order to restore his health, he has to spend several months in the Crimea. While there, he becomes intimate with Maxim Gorky and with Chekhov. They, too, by this time are famous. Yet, even they experience this trepidation in the presence of "the old sorcerer" (as Gorky has termed him). The "sorcerer's" eyes are kind; but when they concentrate on the interlocutor, he feels ripped open and seen through—no thought, no emotion can be hidden from them. Gorky admits that he feels uneasy beneath this uncanny gaze: "He is the devil, and I—a child." And Chekhov confesses: "I am afraid of no one, but of Tolstoy I am afraid." Still, aware of his power, Tolstoy uses it with moderation, as a grown man moderates his strength in playing with children. He still remains a boisterous mental trouble-seeker, ever ready to rush into a passionate discussion; and when he plays a family-whist, his hands tremble and his eyes fulminate with the same passion as they did in the Caucasus, fifty years ago; but then he laughs at himself with a mischievous, mocking laugh. His prevailing tone is, however, that of jest tinged with—irony, fatigue or skepticism: how should one call it? What is the subject of his irony? Men? That would not be astonishing: during his long life, he has come to know them so well. Himself? Perhaps; himself, too, he knows. Looking from the brink of his grave at this long-since-familiar human comedy, he jests and smiles. . . .

Meanwhile, the moment of the "final plunge" unmistakably approaches.

Up to the age of seventy-seven or seventy-eight, his body and spirit resisted the years with remarkable endurance. At seventy-three, he baffled the physicians by surviving three serious illnesses—malaria, pneumonia of both lungs and typhus, in rapid succession. His muscles remained as iron; he easily performed on the parallel bars a very complicated gymnastic feat which proved too difficult for one of his young sons. A daily horseback ride of from twelve to fifteen miles remained a physical necessity for him. And his creative power continued to flow: in the ten years between 1898 and 1908, he wrote some twenty-eight or twenty-nine fiction works, among which are masterpieces of the highest order—it is sufficient to mention "The Living Corpse" (a drama), "The False Coupon," "Reminiscences of Childhood," and finally, "Hadjji Murad," a short historical novel, which is comparable with "War and Peace." Not satisfied with this, his spiritual energy likewise extended itself in numberless other directions—he wrote a long list of philosophic essays, mastered (God alone knows why) the Dutch language, and accomplished many other things. And yet, imperceptibly, this granite rock had begun to crack.

He suffered more and more frequently from various ailments which would keep him in bed now for a day, now for a week. His body, as it were, shrank and dried up. Those who saw him now for the first time, described him—the once tall, bulky Tolstoy—as "a little old man with quick, bobbing steps and slightly bowed legs." His memory began to weaken, in a typical senile manner: "I remember everything that happened in the Caucasus [fifty-five years ago], and I forget what happened yesterday," he would say, with a melancholy smile. It became difficult for him to work in the evenings; now, he could only play chess, listen to music and talk with friends.

Finally, in 1907 and 1908, the symptoms of a complete débâcle began to appear.

Once, he feels badly. A nap seems to have helped him. But during dinner he pales, his eyes become blurred. With strained, helpless attention, he looks at those sitting around him, and . . . he does not recognize them.

"Who is this?"



TOLSTOY AND N. N. GUSSEV, HIS SECRETARY

They tell him it is Annushka (one of his favorite granddaughters).

"Oh, yes! And you, Leo!" he addresses his son. "Where is it you are going?"

"To Petersburg."

"Alone, or with your wife?"

"But my wife is already there—in Petersburg."

"Oh, yes . . . I slept so soundly that I have forgotten everything. Is it true, or did I merely dream it, that my brother Mitya has come?"

(Mitya, Count Dimitry Nicholayevich, had died fifty-two years before.)

An oppressive silence hangs over the Yassnaya dining-room. Sophie Andreyevna and some of the others can hardly restrain their tears.

It is true that such painful episodes do not often occur: most of the time, Tolstoy is in full control of his mind. Moreover, he continues to go on his daily rides; he continues to write (although he hardly has the strength to finish the things he begins); the iron organism still resists. Yet, senile dissolution is already under way.

He becomes still more kind, still softer. And—a typical phenomenon—in these first stages of his second childhood, he remembers more and more often his first childhood, that golden age when they the four brothers frolicked and played in the park. He remembers it with ever-growing emotion and tenderness; and when speaking of his mother, her whom he had never seen, he hardly can restrain his tears. Indeed, the cycle of his human life is almost completed.

Meanwhile, a complicated intrigue has begun to crystallize around the ageing Tolstoy—an intrigue which will rudely hasten him to his grave. A long digression is needed to describe it.

II

What were Tolstoy's relations with Sophie Andreyevna in this last stage of his life?

The sexual bond, of course, had long since worn away. Yet, a strong mutual sentiment still survived to unite them, in spite of all disagreements and misunderstandings. He was ill; she, the faithful nurse, did not leave his bed-side. Once, as she was

applying a compress to him, he looked at her attentively, and said: "I thank you, Sonya. Do not think I have no gratitude for all you have done, and that I do not love you . . ." Here, his voice broke, and he wept. "So," Sophie Andreyevna wrote, "I kissed his dear hands, so familiar to me, and told him that it was happiness for me to nurse him; and I asked him to forgive me, if I had not given him enough happiness in life . . . and in that moment I found that deep, earnest recognition of our thirty-nine-year long union for which I so long yearned . . ." She, too, was ill; in 1906, she had been obliged to undergo a serious operation. Unable to endure his fear for her, he ran away to the forest; and when she was convalescing, with what tenderness his voice trembled as, striding up and down the length of her room, he jested and talked of insignificant things! "You are not well; you do not walk about—and do you know that, not hearing the sound of your steps, I can neither read nor write?" Thus, two old beings, they continued to cling to each other.

But the chronic breach between them, resulting from the irreconcilable difference of their respective attitudes towards life, was not reconciled. On the contrary, it only widened with the years. In spite of the undermining of his dogmas, he obstinately—perhaps with the illogical, senile obstinacy of fixed habit—continued to despise his "luxurious life"; and his heart, continuing with all its old ardor to thirst for the ideal of Christian goodness, ached as before at the thought of his "guilt before the laboring people." He noted:

"If I were to hear of myself from outside, as of another person, who lives in wealth, squeezes all he can out of peasants, sends them to the jail, and all the while, teaches and preaches Christianity, gives nickels to the poor and hides his sordid deeds behind his dear wife, I would unhesitatingly call such a man a scoundrel. And I need to be called so in order to free myself of the temptation of fame and to live for my soul. . . ."

But he not only called himself "a scoundrel"; he often avenged himself by throwing angry words at her who "held him in sin," and they quarreled. Moreover, to this long-standing grudge the new note of his senile capriciousness and grumbling was now added. Within the circle of his family, Tolstoy came further short than ever of being as charming as he was with strangers.

Nor for Sophie Andreyevna was life, generally speaking, all

roses. The story of her disagreements with Tolstoy had long been a subject of the gossip of all Russia. To the great, everything is forgiven. The public unanimously regarded (and will ever regard) the great Tolstoy as an innocent victim of a cruel, despicable and selfish wife. The newspapers, with an impertinent glee, time and again made allusion at her in that sense. Sophie Andreyevna read the same verdict likewise in the eyes of her husband's innumerable admirers, who were constantly passing through Yasnaya and looking at her with silent contempt. More than once, all this caused her to shed bitter tears of offense. She, the "ideal wife," was destined to be remembered by mankind as a monster and a tormenter of genius—and why? Merely because she refused to share his Utopian ideas. What hurt her most deeply was that Tolstoy, far from resenting this publicity, often seemed deliberately to contribute to it, referring, as it were, their domestic disagreement to the court of posterity. Whether in some inexplicable, ascetic desire to "humiliate himself" before the entire world or in an unconsciously vainglorious endeavor to exhibit publicly that his "life in sin" was not his fault, but hers, he often openly discussed his family "misfortunes" with the most casual strangers.

Sophie Andreyevna was past her sixtieth year. Thirteen confinements had wrecked her, both nervously and physically. Add to this all the incidental annoyances of her husband's singular religious passion, which for years had antagonized, hurt and humiliated her. Her disposition had for a long time been gradually spoiling. Her very physical features began to alter unpleasantly in her old age, destroying more and more of her former attractiveness. She became more hysterical and unbalanced than ever, more quarrelsome and extremely obstinate. She continued to love Tolstoy, but she no longer took the trouble to dissimulate her contempt of his philosophy, which, to his consternation and that of his admirers, she never missed an opportunity to mock and belabor as "stupidity." As though in self-defense—and it was indeed psychological self-defense—she often, and rather vulgarly, attacked his views in the presence of strangers.

Among the many questions which occasioned disagreements between them, one which was destined to play a momentous rôle was the question of Tolstoy's copyright and royalties. As we know, Tolstoy had long since given his wife full power of attor-

ney over his works written before 1881, permitting her and his children to dispose of the sums derived from their publication; and (by his newspaper statement of 1891) he "gave in public domain" all his works written after 1881, renouncing all royalties they might bring.

Sophie Andreyevna did not object to the "free" publication of his philosophic works, for she despised them; and, moreover, since they were prohibited in Russia, they represented little of financial value. Nor, for some reason, did she object to the free publication of "The Resurrection." But she vigorously objected to such publication of the rest of his new fiction works. The fact is that, although he renounced copyright on them, he still retained the "right of first publication," which could yield large sums. Some of Sophie Andreyevna's children often asked her for money, the estates divided among them yielding but little; and thus, money was needed. That, because of her husband's sentimental "whim," the family should be deprived of large sums to which, in her opinion, it was entitled, filled her with indignation. Therefore, she resolutely opposed him in every attempt to publish his books gratis. He, however, was equally adamant: he categorically refused to "prostitute" himself by accepting money for his new fiction. Thus, in order not to yield and yet to avoid painful domestic scenes, he preferred not to publish his fiction at all; and for this reason, scores of his late masterpieces, from "The Devil" to "The Living Corpse" and "Hadji Murad," lay in his desk, unknown to the public, not to see the light until after his death. This "deadlock solution" did not grieve him much. In these late years, he definitely regarded his fiction as something absolutely unimportant. "As, in front of a ticket-booth at a fair, a buffoon grimaces in order to lure the public into the tent where the real play is being enacted, so my fiction works play a similar rôle: they serve merely to attract the attention of the public to my serious [philosophical] writings." And since, by this time, his philosophic writings were known to the entire world, he could do without the "buffoon."

What, however, would happen after his death? His great wish was that his heirs should renounce the copyrights on his early works, as well. Of course, he could easily force this upon them by a formal stipulation in his will. But the idea of such a recourse was repugnant to him: to write a will would mean to ad-

dress himself to the authority of the State, which he did not recognize, and to seek its protection against his family by violence, which he abhorred. What, then, could he do? He could only beseech his heirs, try to persuade them. Thus, as early as 1895, he formulated his desire in his diary. Addressing himself to them, he wrote: ". . . If you do it [i.e., give up the copyrights] it will be good—good for yourselves, too. If you do not do it—well, that is up to you. That merely will prove that you are not yet ripe for such an act. But the fact that my works were being *sold* during these ten years has been the most painful thing in my life." This page of his diary was copied on a separate sheet, and the copy was signed by him and preserved, as a semi-official document, by the Princess Marie Lvovna, his favorite daughter. When, however, in 1902, Sophie Andreyevna happened upon it, she was filled with indignation, tore it to bits, and told him bluntly that she would not suffer such attempts to "impoverish the family."

Tolstoy took this calmly, with, metaphorically speaking, but a sigh. He realized too well that he himself had brought up his family in the assurance that his early works belonged to them.

Now, in 1907 and 1908, as he has become quite weak, he for the most part drops this thorny question and avoids thinking about it. He seeks peace. What difference does it make, after all, what use people will make of his writings, after his death! Let Nature take its course!

On one of these days, he composes a new will. He dictates to N. N. Gussev, his secretary, since now it often is difficult for him to write himself:

"Although it is unimportant, I should like to tell of one thing which I wish to be done after my death. . . . It is a trifle of trifles; yet, I wish that no ceremonies be performed at my burial. Let them put my body into a wooden coffin and, if it is not too much trouble, bury it near Zakaz Forest, at the place of 'the green stick' . . ." And upon uttering the name of "the green stick," that symbol of love and goodness with the story of which, seventy-five years before, his little brother Nicholas had so impressed him, the gray-bearded Tolstoy burst into tears.

On September 9, 1908, comes the eightieth anniversary of Tolstoy's birth. The entire world has long been preparing for the celebration of this day; and it is marked by an outburst of ova-

tions so imposing—with telegrams from all parts of Russia and cables from every country of the world, pouring in such numbers that the office force of the Tula telegraph station is kept busy receiving them throughout the night—that perhaps it only now becomes clear to what extent this “little old man” has endeared himself to all mankind.

Sophie Andreyevna beams with joy. Tolstoy, who, not feeling well, is rolled about in a wheel-chair, is apparently also deeply touched, and his eyes often fill with tears. Yet, how true to himself he remains! He notes: “. . . To-day, I became aware of my meanness by the feeling with which I sought the word ‘Tolstoy’ in the newspapers. Oh, how despicable I still am! . . . I write this and ask myself: Do I not write this, too, for those who will presently read this diary? Perhaps, to a certain extent, yes . . . Now, at eighty, I must apply myself to the task of my self-improvement as I worked on it with especial energy at fourteen. . . .”

III

There is, however, one person in Tolstoy’s circle who looks with great displeasure at the passive indifference with which he now treats the question of the fate of his writings after his death. This person is Vladimir Grigorievich Chertkov.

Chertkov had returned to Russia in 1906; as the reader will remember, he had been exiled in 1897, for having signed, with Tolstoy and some others, an appeal for Dukhobors.

The years of his exile had not weakened his friendship with Tolstoy; on the contrary, they consolidated it with new ties. Exiled, Chertkov settled in London and organized there “The Free Word,” a publishing organization, the chief purpose of which was to publish Tolstoy’s prohibited philosophical writings and to smuggle them into Russia for the propaganda of “The True Christianity.” Both because Chertkov had “suffered” for him and by reason of this disinterested work for “the cause,” Tolstoy throbbed with a new feeling of indebtedness and gratitude to his friend. They were in constant correspondence with one another. As before, and in even greater measure than before, Chertkov remained Tolstoy’s chief literary adviser, with the right to “edit” and “use in any way he liked” his philosophic manuscripts, and to preserve his unpublished fiction works. Chertkov even had a special shrine of concrete erected near London for

the preservation of Tolstoy's manuscripts. Thus, the first Metropolitan of Tolstoyism fully retained his rank, and acquired a wide renown throughout Europe as Tolstoy's best friend and disciple.

On his return to Russia, he purchased the little estate of Telyatenki, within two miles of Yassnaya, so as to be as near to Tolstoy as possible. Ever since that time, the two friends never failed to meet once, or even twice a day.

The care and attention with which Chertkov surrounds his "dear friend" (for it is so that they address each other) are undescribable: one actually has the impression that this man, so arbitrary in his behavior to others, has sacrificed all of his life to Tolstoy. Tolstoy goes on a walk in the forest; Chertkov accompanies him, but at a distance of some twenty yards: he is afraid that Tolstoy may faint (for now he often has fainting fits), but at the same time he does not want to disturb Tolstoy's meditation. Tolstoy's writings must be copied? Chertkov maintains a corps of stenographers and secretaries for this purpose. Chertkov is not alone in his attentions and his faith; he has friends forming, so to speak, a party of his own, who are at the same time Tolstoy's friends—of such are A. B. Goldenweiser, a pianist; A. F. Strakhov, a talented thinker and writer (and a namesake of the late N. N. Strakhov, Tolstoy's friend in the seventies and eighties); of such also is the Countess Alexandra Lvovna, Tolstoy's youngest daughter, who strongly dislikes her mother, adores her father, subscribes to his philosophy and is an enthusiastic member of the Chertkov group. The older and weaker Tolstoy becomes, the more susceptible he becomes to this atmosphere of adoration and flattery. And Chertkov's influence over him, which was sufficiently great in former years, now becomes enormous. Tolstoy is being drawn in, almost hypnotized; some very reliable and impartial observers, like P. I. Biryukov, have the impression that the old man has to such an extent surrendered his will-power into Chertkov's strong hands that, "although loving Chertkov sincerely, he yet feels painfully oppressed by Chertkov's tutelage over him, but submits himself to it unreservedly." Of course, Sophie Andreyevna has long since been jealous of her husband's "dear friend" and has grumbled about his influence; but, as in former years, she is powerless to alter the situation in any particular.

To Chertkov, the prospect of Tolstoy's literary inheritance falling into the hands of his family cannot but be extremely dis-

tasteful. First of all, Tolstoy's death would void his newspaper statement of 1891; thus, juridically speaking, even his late works would become the property of the family. Would the family respect Tolstoy's will and leave them in public ownership? If it did not do so, Chertkov would at once lose his position, so precious to him, of the full master and transmitter of Tolstoy's writings to the world. Besides, the passive abandonment by Tolstoy of his writings to his family would constitute an act of unfaithfulness to the Tolstoyan principles; "the teacher" would once more fail to live up to the letter of his preachings, and Chertkov, the irreproachable knight—or rather, the attentive book-keeper of the letter of Tolstoyism, would not permit it.

IV

The storm of ovation with which the world greeted Tolstoy's eightieth anniversary prompts Sophie Andreyevna to undertake a new twenty-volume edition of her husband's collected works. The sensational feature of this edition is that it will also include most of his philosophic writing: after the Revolution of 1905, the censorship has considerably relaxed in Russia, and Sophie Andreyevna is certain to obtain the permission of the authorities. Apparently, she also makes some attempt to wrest from Tolstoy some of his new fiction works. He resists. Moreover, the enterprise necessitates the investment of many thousands of roubles, and it requires from her tremendous labors; nervous and exhausted, she makes scenes and they quarrel again. Chertkov sees how difficult it is for Tolstoy to maintain his resistance, and it seems to him possible that the old man may make fatal concessions. So Chertkov begins to act.

In September 1909 he invites both of the Tolstoys to Kryokshino, his uncle's estate, near Moscow. There, a string-quartette plays; Sophie Andreyevna's name-day is celebrated; it is supposed to be merely a pleasure-trip. But Chertkov finds a convenient opportunity to speak to Tolstoy in private. What does he say? Of this we can judge by the entry in Tolstoy's diary: "Talked with Chertkov of my children's* intention to appropriate my works, given to public. I shrink from believing it." But how can he help believing "the dear friend"?

* Chertkov alluded to Tolstoy's two youngest sons, Counts Michael and Andrew, and, of course, also to Sophie Andreyevna.

The next day, Chertkov, Goldenweiser and some other members of Chertkov's party corner Tolstoy with some quite definite words on the subject of a formal will. It is still repugnant to him to make a will, but by what other means can he succeed in frustrating "the plot"? Presently, a will is drafted by which Tolstoy bequeaths all of his new writings to the public and appoints Chertkov as the executor of this will and the fully empowered administrator and editor of his manuscripts. While signing this document, Tolstoy looks fearfully at the doors: What if Sophie Andreyevna should enter!

Thus, Chertkov has triumphed. But, unexpectedly, the matter takes yet a new turn.

A lawyer to whom the will is shown pronounces it invalid: one cannot make a bequest "to the public"; there must be a definite heir. Together with the lawyer, Chertkov drafts a new will by which Tolstoy appoints as his literary heiress Countess Alexandra Lvovna, his youngest daughter; in an explanatory letter attached to the will it is, however, made clear that she will have to place the whole of this inheritance at Chertkov's disposal for transmission to the public. Chertkov sends this new document to Yassnaya for Tolstoy's signature with F. D. Strakhov.

Tolstoy, however, is now deeply dissatisfied with what he did at Kryokshino and is ready to give up the idea of any will. But Strakhov argues so cleverly and brilliantly, playing on the old man's greatest weakness—Christian pride—with such skill, and terrorizes him so cunningly by the tenderly worded threat that he will greatly fall in the opinion of "his friends" (i.e., Chertkov) if, by not signing the will, he "indirectly promotes the establishment of private property in his works by his family," that Tolstoy's doubts are dispelled. Moreover, piqued, Tolstoy takes a sudden, heroic decision: he will prove to his friends and to mankind that he not only preaches, but also acts! The family? The less money they will have, the better it will be for their souls. And he baffles Strakhov: he will leave to the public not only his new works, but *all* his works, including those written before 1881; the family will retain nothing: "I want to be *plus royaliste que le roi*!"

For various reasons, the will drafted to this effect has to be twice re-worded. Finally, on August 4, 1910, in a forest near Yassnaya, on the stump of a tree, Tolstoy definitely signs it, with

three of Chertkov's emissaries as witnesses. While signing it, he jests: "What conspirators we are!" (for this is all done in strict secrecy from Sophie Andreyevna); but the jest rings false: he looks embarrassed and uneasy. The contents of this will of Tolstoy's—or, perhaps, of this will which Chertkov imposed, for the sake of "Christianity," on the old, hesitating, will-less Tolstoy by his strong and clever hand—we already know: all goes to Countess Alexandra Lvovna and, through her, to Chertkov, who must see to it that Tolstoy's works shall be published without copyright. The consequences of this document prove to be momentous.

v

While all this was going on, Sophie Andreyevna, overworked with the new edition, tired and exhausted, suddenly fell into a condition of painful nervous excitement. Her condition was so grave that physicians were summoned, and they diagnosed paranoia—that is to say, an incurable madness. Future developments proved that they were mistaken: in later years, she became perfectly normal again. It was just her hysteria; but this hysteria now became so acute and violent that at moments it took the form of a real mental derangement, often rendering her undeniably abnormal and irresponsible for her actions.

At this time, to everybody's misfortune, a trifling thing occurred. She learned that Tolstoy had given Chertkov one of his diaries for the last years, and she became indignant: "My husband's diaries are the *sacra sanctorum* of his life and, consequently, of my life . . . they cannot remain in the hands of any stranger!" She wrote a letter to Chertkov, imploring him to return them. Chertkov, perhaps feeling that his purpose was already attained and that he no longer needed to restrain himself, came to Yasnaya and not only brutally refused, but permitted himself to shout at the old woman that "if he had a wife like that, he long since would have fled from her or committed suicide . . ."

Sophie Andreyevna requested him not to come to Yasnaya any more. But what angered her most was that Tolstoy, instead of checking Chertkov, only looked at him with helpless, apologetic eyes and continued to meet him daily on his horseback rides.

Moreover, she noticed that Tolstoy, Alexandra Lvovna and Chertkov's emissaries were constantly whispering among themselves; plainly, they were hiding something from her, and she

began to surmise that a will was, or was going to be, written in secret from her. That was more than she could suffer. The financial part of it played but a secondary rôle in her consideration. But the feeling that "Chertkov had taken her husband away from her"; that, spiritually, "Lyovochka" was no longer hers; that, for the first time, he had secrets from her; that, consequently, all of her happiness was bitterly destroyed and ended—all that whipped her hysteria into action and raised her jealousy into a monomania. With hatred for Chertkov and the mad resolution to destroy this will at any cost displacing all other considerations from her mind, the unfortunate woman lost all control of herself and became half insane.

Yassnaya is transformed into a mad-house. Day and night, she spies on Tolstoy; tries to overhear his conversations; digs secretly in his desk, among his papers. At the slightest provocation, she bursts into tears and rolls on the floor with a bottle of opium at her mouth, screaming: "I will swallow it! I swear that I will!" She falls before Tolstoy on her knees and implores him to say whether or not there is a will; he frowns and says: "No . . ." And, at times, she implores him to read to her those passages from his diary which he wrote, forty-eight years before, when he was her madly enamored fiancé; and, while he reads of those irretrievably lost days of their happiness, she weeps bitterly . . .

Meanwhile, Chertkov, having won the case of "Christianity," continues, from Telyatenki, to hold Tolstoy fast in his grip, so that the old man, overpowered by these domestic scenes, shall not change front and frustrate his victory. He tries to persuade Tolstoy that the unfortunate woman's insanity is nothing more than a feigned pose, calculated to provoke pity and originating on financial interest alone. He writes to Tolstoy: "Dear friend: Her purpose is, after having separated you from me and, if possible, from Sasha [Alexandra Lvovna], to discover from you, through unrelaxing daily pressure, whether or not there exists a will depriving the family of literary rights . . . If there is such a will, she proposes to summon reactionary physicians, who would testify that you have fallen into senile insanity, and thus your will would be invalidated. . . ." At the same time he is writing such letters to Tolstoy, Chertkov writes an almost tender letter to Sophie Andreyevna, apologizing in a highly Christian manner for his brutality and again seeking admittance to the house, feeling

that it would be safer to have Tolstoy under constant control and surveillance . . .

And Tolstoy?

Quite old and weak—his condition is still worse than it was in 1908; fainting fits, lapses when he does not recognize his friends, and other symptoms of decrepitude have become more frequent—enmeshed in this hideous struggle for his literary estate waged over his head by an insane woman and an obstinate fanatic, he looks so bewildered, impotent and lost that it is painful to see him. His conscience is constantly tormented by the lie—the first lie of his life—which his lips have uttered and must reiterate—the concealment of the existence of the will from the family. “I am guilty before her,” he says, for he understands that he is responsible for her sufferings. P. I. Biryukov, his friend and biographer, told him as much, and advised him either to destroy the will or announce it to the family. Tolstoy felt that Biryukov was right; but as soon as Chertkov objected, he shrank from the decision, dared not assert himself, and promised to let the will remain as it was, if only “Chertkov should not be dissatisfied with me.”

The thoughts of the old mind are confused and clouded. Since Chertkov says that Christianity is there, Christianity must be there. Yet, through this senile mist and haze, one sentiment, one thought pulsates with constant clearness: he is guilty; he is placed in a position where he must struggle against his wife for the sake of a lofty principle (what difference does it make that the old mind misunderstands this principle?); and if that is so, he must struggle with love, kindness and forgiveness. “For God’s sake,” he begs his children, “do not reproach Mother; be gentle and kind to her!” And he implores her: “. . . I cannot calmly bear to see your sufferings. Last night, you went away in emotion, suffering. I lay down, but I did not sleep; I wanted to think of you, to feel you, and I listened, trying to hear you; and in the night, I saw you awake and in my dreams . . . Bethink yourself, beloved friend! Cease torturing others and yourself, for it is you who suffer a hundred times more than any one! . . .”

Yet, he could not restrain his senile irritation and resentment from breaking out at moments. He could not live in this atmosphere of “watching, eavesdropping and constant reproaches.” A desire to flee, to hide away from it all, awoke in him more than

once; besides, was it not his old dream to go away from this "luxurious life," to become "a beggar, a tramp"? Before, he could not do this, because he did not want "to destroy the love uniting the family"; but now, since the family was torn by mad dissension, he was certainly free. Here, again, long familiar thoughts mingled in a confused medley in his mind, until he himself did not really know why he wanted to go away—whether in order to flee from her, or whether in order to appear before himself—and, perhaps, before men—in the poignant aspect of a Christian vagabond, forsaking all and treading the long highways. And yet, beyond this desire he apprehended still another insistent imperative: he must struggle by means of "love, kindness and forgiveness"—"If a man hesitates between two decisions, he always must choose that one of them in which there is more self-denial, more humility." He must therefore remain. He must bear his cross.

Yet . . .

VI

On the night of November 9, he is awakened by the sound of cautious steps and the rustle of papers. Light filters beneath the door of his study. Sophie Andreyevna is at his papers again! Noticing that he is awake, she goes to him and asks how he feels, hoping to deceive him by the pretense that she is merely interested in his health. Uncontrollable disgust and indignation seize him. She disappears into her room and is soon asleep. His decision is made—he will go away.

Trying to step noiselessly, he dresses and hurriedly writes a farewell letter. Then, he awakens Alexandra Lvovna and Dr. D. Makovicky, his home physician and fervent admirer. Instead of petting the poor old man and putting him back to bed, these two solemnly approve of his decision to "carry out his life-long Christian dream."

His mind, burning with emotion, hastening, fearing that Sophie Andreyevna should awaken and stop him by entreaties and hysterics, he packs a few of his belongings with trembling hands. The night is pitch-black and cold. Going to the stables to order the horses harnessed, he wanders into the shrubs, scratches himself, loses his hat and cannot find it, falls, rises, and pushes on again. Finally, everything is ready. With Dr. Makovicky as his only companion, he leaves; the dim outlines of Yassnaya, the

ancestral home where he had spent all his life, disappear in the darkness—forever.

Where, in this gloomy night, is he going? He hardly knows. For the time being, he boards a train, and presently arrives at the Monastery of Shemardino, where the Countess Marie Nicholayevna, his eighty-year-old sister, who has been a nun for many years, is living. In telling her of the cause of his departure and of the misery which both he and Sophie Andreyevna have suffered, he weeps like a child; and like a child, she and her daughter console him. The shock of the last night has apparently shattered him; and henceforth, it is in vain that one seeks for logic in his actions.

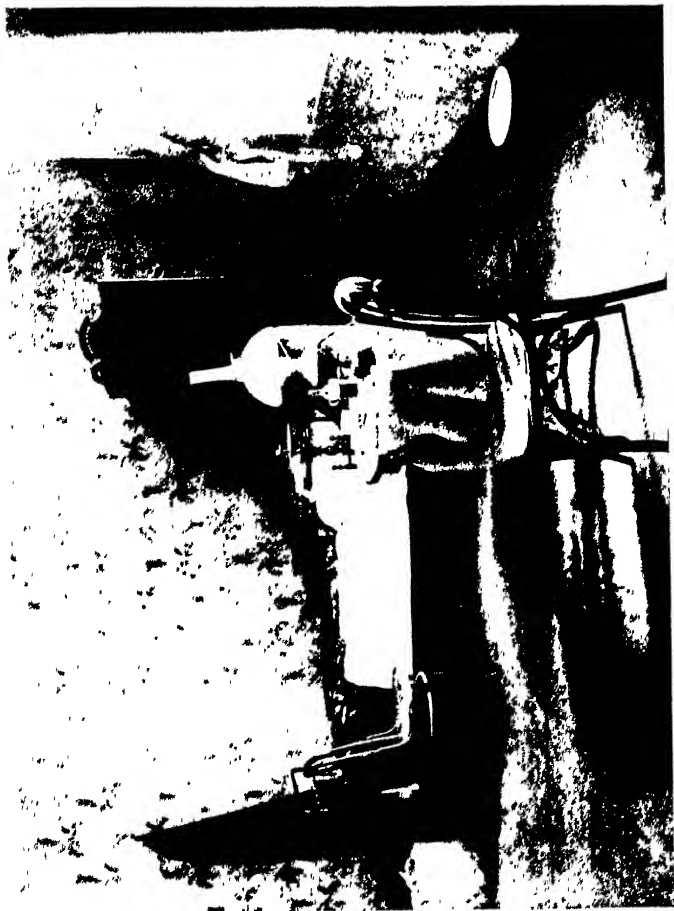
When, presently, he is more calm, he thinks of hiring a peasant cabin in the neighborhood and settling in it for the rest of his life. But, in the night, he awakens, seized with the terrible fear that Sophie Andreyevna and the elder children may overtake him here. "Quickly! We must go further!" he cries again and again to his companions (who are now two, for the Countess Alexandra Lvovna has joined them). The last exertion of will-power of his life, now already a blind effort, pushes him on and on. They will go south, to Novorossiysk, where a distant relative lives; from there, he will go still further, perhaps abroad—for instance, to Bulgaria.

They ride. But with each lurch of the railway carriage, he feels worse and worse. He is in fever. He has pneumonia.

They are obliged to get off at the first large station, which happens to be Astapovo. Dr. Makovicky so arranges matters that the station master places his house at their disposal. Hardly able to move, Tolstoy is led there and sinks into the bed.

When, on the morning of that fatal day, Sophie Andreyevna emerges from her room, Tolstoy's letter is handed to her. She read:

"My departure will grieve you. That pains me, but believe and understand that I could not do otherwise! My position in the house was becoming, has indeed become, unbearable. Moreover, I cannot consent to live in luxury . . . and I want to do that which men of my old age often do—to withdraw from worldly life, in order to spend my last days in tranquillity and solitude. Pray, do not make any effort to join me, even if you should learn



THE ROOM AT ASTAPOVO IN WHICH TOLSTOY DIED

where I am . . . I thank you for your honest forty-eight years of life with me, and I ask you to forgive me all in which I am guilty before you . . . If you should wish to communicate something to me, you may do so through Sasha [Alexandra Lvovna]. She will know where I am . . . but she cannot tell you, because she has promised me not to do so . . .”

With a shriek, Sophie Andreyevna drops the letter. She runs, stumbling, out of the house, reaches the pond, throws herself into it and disappears under the water. The servants rescue her.

The news of Tolstoy's flight and illness is a tremendous sensation throughout Russia—a sensation comparable with that of his making of shoes, but, of course, an infinitely greater one. The newspapers are effusive in vapid banalities about this “exploit of the great Christian.” A regiment of newspaper correspondents gather at Astapovo, standing day and night around the station master's house. The Government, fearing the possibility of some public demonstration, keep a large force of gendarmes and secret agents at Astapovo. The telegraph at this humble station has never worked so feverishly as now.

After Sophie Andreyevna had recovered from her first shock, she hastened to Astapovo, accompanied by her two younger sons. The other children also have gathered here. Chertkov, of course, has been at Tolstoy's bedside ever since his collapse.

Tolstoy lay shaken by a high fever, losing with every day the little of the life-force that still remained with him. Yet, he remained fully conscious; his mind even became calmer and clearer than it was during the first days of his flight. Physically, he suffered terribly; but he was inexpressibly meek, kind and tender to all those who surrounded him. He knew that the end was coming. His eyes continually scrutinized the heavens, and, in a feeble voice, he dictated to Alexandra Lvovna his thoughts on God.

He often asked about Sophie Andreyevna, and cried; but in the first days, he continued to “flee from her”: his heart was so weak that, as he asserted, the emotion of seeing her “would be fatal for me.” Consequently, they did not tell him that she was present. When, later, they asked him if he should like to see her, he remained silent, and only breathed heavily. Did the desire to see her and to yield himself again to the care of her loving hands

struggle with the vague fear that, by such return to her, he would set aside the virtue of his "Christian flight"? But he groaned: "Too much will fall on Sonya's shoulders! . . . We have arranged matters badly! . . ." Did he mean the will?

After that, words and thoughts alike became confused. His lips twitched, but only unintelligible sounds emerged from them, and, suffocating and groaning, he was exasperated that no one could understand him. Some one enters the room; he struggles to leap out of bed and cries with delight: "Marie! Marie!" He fancies the figure that entered is the Princess Marie, his best-loved daughter, who had died in 1906. And yet, through this agony of ultimate hallucinations, the idea, the passion which he had so anxiously pursued throughout his life obsesses his thoughts to the last minute; half unconscious, he whispers: "To seek—always to seek! . . ."

Meanwhile, pale, weeping and shaken, Sophie Andreyevna, supported by her sons or by nurses, walks every morning from the railroad coach in which she lives to the station master's house. They do not permit her to enter; but now and again some one of them comes out and gives her news of "Lyovochka." All day long, day after day, she stands in the snow, and waits.

They let her go to him only on November 20, when he is already beyond all hope of recovery. He lies unconscious, with his eyes closed. "I whispered tenderly into his ear, hoping that he still might hear me, that I had been there, at Astapovo, all the time, and that I had loved him every moment, to the end. . . . Two heavy sighs, as though brought forth by a great effort, answered my words; and then, all was silent."

They carried out his will. His body was placed in a simple wooden coffin and buried, in the presence of thousands of spectators, near Zakaz Forest, at the place of "the green stick," that magic symbol of eternal love, of goodness and peace among men. His grave is marked neither by a cross, nor by a monument; it is only a simple little mound, surrounded by a fence and by high, shady trees.

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